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The French Classical Romances

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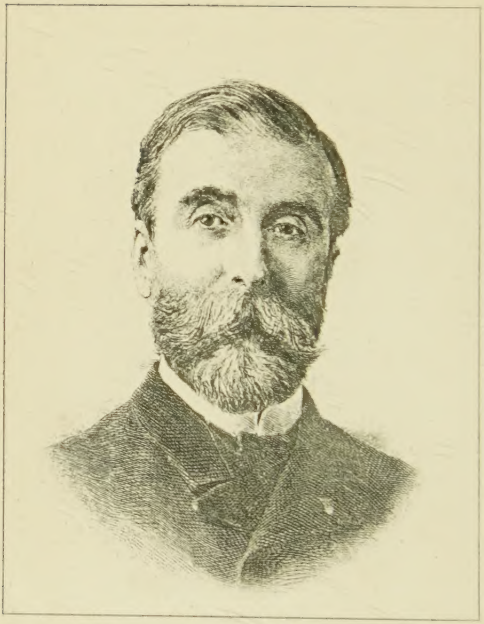

Ludovic Halevy

LUDOVIC HALÉVY

Abbé Constantin

AND

A Marriage for Love

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

WITH A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION
BY PROF. ROBERT HERRICK, OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

A FRONTISPIECE AND NUMEROUS
OTHER PORTRAITS WITH
DESCRIPTIVE NOTES BY
OCTAVE UZANNE

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LUDOVIC HALÉVY

THAT Ludovic Halévy began his career in letters at the theatre is amply apparent in the ten volumes of stories, which are the fruit of his later years. The stage, the properties of the stage, actors, dancers, authors, managers, scene-shifters, and that part of the gay world which seeks its amusement behind the scenes—all these figure repeatedly in M. Halévy's pages. The longest tale which he has written—it could hardly be called a novel—*Criquette*, is the story of an actress who makes her *début* at the Porte-Saint-Martin in a *grand pièce de faerie*. With the little Criquette are involved a number of other stage people: Pascal, an ardent young actor; Rosita, who is less of the theatre than of the demi-monde; and the kindly provincial manager, Père Lemuche, who in his youth "had the honour of creating three rôles at the Française," of which the most ambitious contained three lines! There is the story of the clown Kara-kiri, once

the famous Lambescasse, the idol of Marseilles and Toulouse; and the story of Guignol, who held the stage of the marionettes in the Champs Élysées. Among these sketches are slipped in now and then a few pages of reminiscences—old stories of actors and managers and playwrights. The bickerings of gray-haired collaborators in a spectacular piece, the sentiments of a ballet-dancer's mother, the chatter of chorus-girls, the confidences of an *ouvreuse*—these are some of the results of the dramatist's wide acquaintance behind the scenes. The best of all this, perhaps, lies in the series of stories that have to do with the little Cardinals. In many ways the Cardinals, father and mother, Pauline and Virginie, are M. Halévy's most vivid characters. Certainly the love affairs of the two little ballet-dancers are the gayest, most comic adventures in the volumes of stories; and M. and Mme. Cardinal, who watch anxiously over the immorality of their children, are veritable types of pure comedy. These people of the theatre, lightly drawn, sketched with fine irony, reveal one aspect of Paris that belonged peculiarly to the second empire. Even when M. Halévy turns to other scenes, the theatres and the strip of boulevard before them are never far in the back-

ground. Thus came, naturally enough, much of the material for the story-teller, and M. Halévy, if never weighted by a ponderous purpose, represents the often-travestied world of the stage with delicate sympathy.

In a more important sense M. Halévy's art depends upon the theatre. His method is first and always that of a man of the theatre, of one who has been forced to sketch his characters incisively rather than subtly. A dramatist, at least a dramatist of the Halévy order, seizes the type rather than the individual. His people fall easily into ranks of saliently portrayed, none too intricate figures, who have caught from the scene something of its metallic character. A dramatist such as M. Halévy does not seek to represent too much, to analyze too profoundly. He is content with a firm outline and a conventional interior. Thus the people in his stories are more or less stage people—nervously outlined, plainly realized, seen from the floor of the theatre and not too closely. Such, in a degree, is the good Abbé Constantin with his incessant preoccupation in benevolence, his simple fear of heretics, and his childish joy in hearing the organ played in his church once more—in fact, "a Curé neither young, nor gloomy, nor stern; a Curé with

white hair, and looking kind and gentle." Such are the two rich young American women, who disappoint so agreeably the Abbé's dreary expectations. They are wholly Americans of the theatre—both exceedingly beautiful, both extraordinarily unconventional, both boundlessly rich and benevolent, and, to fill the measure, good Catholics! In detail they are impossible young women, fresh from fairy-land, but delightful—all that a kindly Parisian would have the rich young barbarians from across the sea to be in reality. Equally charming and theatrical are M. Halévy's young men and women—pre-eminently the women. They are different versions of the *ingénue.* Such are the well-bred young mistress of Jupiter in *Un Mariage d'Amour*, and the bourgeois heroine of *Princesse*, who contrives to escape the lawyers and civil engineers and marry a real prince, and the still more competent young woman of *Un Grand Mariage*, who cleverly manages papa and mamma. Of the same order are the young married people of the upper middle class, whom we meet in *Régénerés* or *Un Budget Parisien.* To say that these are stage types is not to condemn them or to disparage M. Halévy's art. With the best of them, such as we have in the two stories

of this volume, the author's frank affection for his people has saved him from pure artificiality. The young lovers of *Un Mariage d'Amour* are human enough and finely realized, and Bettina's impulses are not merely theatrical. If we feel that these people have played their parts before over the footlights, it has never been more freshly, more daintily.

Indeed, he has done much better by them than by his professedly theatrical pieces. It is hardly worth while to attempt a separation of the contributions of such close collaborators as Meilhac and Halévy. The success of their work is its uniformity. Without great severity, we may say of it as a whole that it is best where it is most ephemeral, as in the librettos for Offenbach's music, especially in *La Belle Hélène* and *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein*, which have not yet lost all their sparkle, and worst in their serious plays such as *Frou-frou* and *Fanny Lear*, which have the exhortatory weakness of Dumas-*fils* without his cleverness. M. Halévy is not a serious person, who has the world to reform with a problem play, and though *Frou-frou* and some of its mates have had more than a temporary success upon the stage, the indefatigable collaborators must have felt safer in the field of *vaude-*

ville, where their ready gift for light satire could have scope. Moreover, the loose construction of the heavier Meilhac-Halévy plays contrasts unfavourably with the fine workmanship of Dumas or of Augier. On the other hand, this same unpremeditation and simplicity of outline is a distinct gain in the stories. What is a defect in the one form, at least from the point of view of the purely artificial school of drama to which Meilhac and Halévy belonged, becomes a distinct virtue in the other. M. Halévy is an excellent *raconteur*, as may be seen anywhere in his stories, and especially in the two volumes of memoirs—*Notes et Souvenirs* and *L'Invasion*—but to write solid plays one must be more than a good *raconteur*. And so, though the novelist gave a good part of his life to the theatre and won the larger part of his success there, it is rather the experience and material thus gained that count.

This collaboration with Meilhac ran from the early sixties to the late seventies; the volumes of stories appeared from the late seventies to the early eighties. Nearly midway between these two periods came the Franco-Prussian War, in which M. Halévy played his part like a loyal citizen, making the distressing campaign that ended at Sedan. The impressions and experiences of

the great *débâcle* are vividly related in the two volumes of memoirs referred to above. The enlargement of horizon which came from these months spent outside of the boulevards, away from the theatres, turned M. Halévy in a sense from a vaudevillist into a shrewd and kindly observer of men and affairs, and made it possible for him to write *L'Abbé Constantin.* Superficially, the war gave him a larger *décor* for his stories, more figures, some new motives. Traces of this advance may be seen in the early pages of *L'Abbé Constantin.* The army becomes the chosen profession of M. Halévy's excellent young men. The comic side of this transition period from the second empire to the republic found expression in many of the shorter stories, notably *L'Ambassadeur Chinoise*, *La Petite Caille Plucheuse*, *Le Feu d'Artifice.* What M. Halévy thought of the absurdities and humiliations of the catastrophe is gathered more directly from the memoirs. As a Government employee during the earlier years of his life the young dramatist had seen a good deal of the workings of the political machine, and he had little reverence for it, or, we may as well add, for the republican Chamber of Deputies. The Government of his country resembled too closely

one of his own farces. Nevertheless, the Franco-Prussian War, the two bombardments of Paris, the Commune, were of immense benefit to him personally, as they were to other young men of letters of his time. They drove these Parisians from the theatres and *cafés*, and showed them that France was larger than Paris, and that the world held more in it than the inutilities and superficialities of the second empire. Not that M. Halévy gained from this experience any deep purpose or views of the world or wealth of literary material such as Zola or Daudet gained. None the less to this accident of an important experience is due largely the tender, sympathetic tone of his stories, a human note very much superior to that of his plays.

For M. Halévy's excellences are excellences of a good heart, a fortunate temperament, an honest and sympathetic personality. He has no philosophy of art or of life, belongs to no school, is derived from no very clearly defined literary genealogy, and leaves no individual mark upon the thought or art of his contemporaries. To one of his perfect literary breeding and sense of humour, nothing could be more amusing than to be taken too seriously, to be analyzed too closely. His is largely an unpremeditated and

fortuitous art, and hence, probably, its popular appeal. Mérimée is the writer of stories whom he most loves; and yet he takes practically nothing from this master beyond a scrupulous and limpid style. Certainly he has nothing in common with Mérimée's cold and sardonic spirit, or his refined romanticism, which drove the older writer to out-of-the-way themes. Even in the matter of style, Halévy is not as compact and firm as Mérimée, nor does he share the strenuous enthusiasm of Flaubert and De Maupassant over the technique of expression. The good qualities of his style resemble the good qualities of his temperament: it is a well-bred, pure, and graceful style. In this matter, as in others, he is nearer Daudet than any other one of his greater contemporaries, shunning the extremes of a Flaubert and of a Zola. It follows naturally that M. Halévy, having no determined creed of art, does not hesitate to intrude himself upon his scene, to make his own observations, and at times even to preach his little sermons. These occasional lapses from the stern objectivity of the naturalists are scarcely noticeable to an Anglo-Saxon reader, so much is he inured to the practice of an author's personal interference with his characters. Although the earlier generation of great

novelists—Victor Hugo, George Sand, Balzac—never refrained from taking this personal tone towards its readers, giving them useful information, lecturing them at a pinch, in our time it is no longer the fashion to do so. Even the little novelists of the newspapers have learned well their lesson of objectivity. But though M. Halévy's observations are never very fresh nor vital, they are honest and high-minded, like him; and what is more important, they are not numerous or insistent. In *Un Mariage d'Amour*, for example, there is not a word from the author; the little scene unfolds itself completely from within. For this reason, perhaps, it is the most perfect of his stories in form—reserved, precise, and yet suggestive, altogether one of the best examples of its kind in modern literature. The same cannot be said unreservedly of *L'Abbé Constantin*, where the author's patriotism and "views" come, here and there, rather near the surface.

M. Halévy has taken no part in the main literary currents of his period. *Madame Bovary* was published when he was twenty-three. He was already writing for the theatre when *Les Miserables* appeared in 1862. Such significant novels as *Renée Mauperin*, by the Goncourts,

Flaubert's *Salammbô*, Zola's Rougon-Macquart series, Daudet's *Le Nabab* and *Sapho*, came during the next twenty years, the productive years of M. Halévy's life. During the same time the works of George Eliot, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky were being translated into French. Yet there is no sign of all this formidable literary ferment in M. Halévy's stories. What he thought of some of the new novelists may be gathered from this little explosion in *L'Abbé Constantin:*

"A child [Jean] . . . who gave promise of being what his father and grandfather had been —good and honest. There are many such families in France; our unfortunate country is, on many points, cruelly calumniated by certain novelists, who paint it in very violent and exaggerated colours. True, the history of good people is more often than not dull and uninteresting. This story proves it."

"Violent and exaggerated colours"—that is what the kindly, well-balanced temperament of M. Halévy repudiates. Again, in *Notes et Souvenirs* (page 149) he speaks more positively of his beliefs:

"And the great advantage of the simple style is, that when you speak or write you speak or

write for everybody. It has been said: 'There is somebody who has more *ésprit* than Voltaire, and that is everybody.' Well, we shouldn't hate or despise that 'somebody.' I remember one day I received an invitation to a literary gathering. The invitation closed with a postscript: 'We shall dine off the bourgeois.' I stayed at home. That feast did not tempt me.

"We must not write simply for the refined, the *blasé*, and the squeamish. We must write for that man who goes there on the street with his nose in his newspaper and his umbrella under his arm. We must write for that fat, breathless woman whom I see from my window, as she climbs painfully into the Odéon omnibus. We must write courageously for the bourgeois, if it were only to try to refine them, to make them less bourgeois. And if I dared, I should say that we must write even for fools."

With this robust sincerity Halévy writes for "the man who goes there on the street with his nose in his newspaper and his umbrella under his arm." He writes courageously for the bourgeois, of whom he is one—for the upper bourgeois, perhaps, who have a moral as well as a material position and an ineradicable belief in the world. This dislike of the narrow aristocracy of letters,

which is concerned with its own tastes and rejects contemptuously what the average person likes to read, is at the root of M. Halévy's popularity, not only with his own countrymen, but more especially with Anglo-Saxon readers, where the kind of bourgeois that he meant obtains more abundantly than in Paris. This frank acceptance of the commonplace majority, however, does not make him a superficial observer. The volumes of memoirs are replete with shrewd, sagacious, humorous sketches of his people. No one sees more keenly than M. Halévy their political and social limitations; but he observes in a kindly spirit.

When one writes for the commonplace man "who goes there on the street with his nose in his newspaper and his umbrella under his arm," one must sympathize with the ideals of his fellow-man, and believe in the essential health and sanity of his subject. All this M. Halévy does, not merely professes. He believes, and rejoices in the fact, that sometimes—nay, very often—young people fall in love with one another, and preserve far into their married life the purity and nobility of the sentiment. *Un Mariage d'Amour* is an idyll upon this theme. Among the short stories there are many others that touch

the same theme, especially from the side of the woman, for M. Halévy has a special tact in revealing the complex sentiments of the girl who is about to choose a husband. If he were ever a psychologist, his field would be the young unmarried woman. Even with the somewhat theatrical formula of Bettina in *L'Abbé Constantin*, he is best in the love affair.

There are other sentiments akin to this vernal and romantic one, which aré portrayed by Halévy—family affection, unworldliness, and loyalty between men and women without the bond of passion. His people are nearly all *braves gens*, and have the good heart and honest purposes of their kind. This feeling for the honest sentiments of life is all the more noteworthy when we consider the large part that the theatre plays in M. Halévy's stories. That world, popularly supposed to lie beyond the bounds of convention, is represented with the same gentle, good-humoured optimism that pictures the household at the Château Longueval. That actors are jealous and actresses are not always chaste, the kindly dramatist recognises with averted eyes. That they are a generous, warm-hearted folk, and that their immorality is more frequently amusing than repulsive, are

facts equally true, and from his point of view better worth preserving.

The danger in this optimistic position for a writer of romance, if it be a danger, is that inevitably, in the expansion of his heart, he carries his people over from reality to fairy-land, from the virtuous sentiments to vapid sentimentality. There is as much error—and as much dulness—in seeing the world all rose-colour as in seeing it all black. M. Halévy does not escape altogether this danger of sentimentality. His *premières danseuses* and *ingénues* and young officers now and then seem to belong to one of those vast fairy spectacles that he is fond of describing. Bettina and Mme. Scott are rather cloyingly charitable, and redundant with honest theories of love and marriage. Even Jean is too much the good boy, with his besetting fear of appearing mercenary if he should be forced to take Bettina's millions along with her love. Moreover, the good ladies are oppressively wealthy. Elsewhere in the stories there is a generous profusion of good princes, honest counts, and admirable millionaires. Each reader has his own saturation point in this matter of sentiment. Nowhere does M. Halévy make greater demands than in the two stories of this volume.

The danger in the sympathetic treatment of life lies in the temptation to make things too perfect. Yet M. Halévy's good young men and young women are, in their way, as possible as Nana or one of M. Bourget's marvellously neurotic cases. If the end of one treatment is sentimentality, the end of the other is bestiality and insanity. The same indestructible spirit of romanticism, the desire to present life a little more fervidly than it is ordinarily experienced by the "man who goes there with his nose in his newspaper," pushes both temperaments to the extremes. A Zola and a Halévy are thus, in common, romanticists at bottom. Moreover, it cannot be confidently maintained that the one is less profound than the other, although the latter is certainly less complex, less harassing. At least, the commonplace multitude, to which Halévy is content to address himself, overwhelmingly testifies its preference for the one kind of illusion—that of the fairy spectacle—to the other. That M. Halévy's stories are so widely read in America and England is not due merely to the fact that his morals and French are equally pure and fit for the youth of our schools and colleges: his stories satisfy the tastes of an Anglo-Saxon people, who have an abiding faith

in the healthy sentiments. There are not many French novelists of to-day who unite in anything like the same degree as M. Halévy excellence of style with what the English critic commonly calls "a healthy tone." There are a goodly number of English and American writers who possess these strengths, and they are widely popular. They, too, like the good Abbé, are "de la même race, de la race des tendres, des justes, et des bienfaisants."

ROBERT HERRICK.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

LUDOVIC HALÉVY *is the son of the poet Léon Halévy. He was born in Paris, on the 1st of January, 1834. He was educated at the Lycée Louis le Grand, and passed directly from school into the Civil Service. He was originally attached as a clerk to the secretariat général of the Ministère d'État, and rose six years later (1858) to be chef de bureau at the Colonial Office. In 1861 he was appointed editor of the publications of the Corps Législatif. But before he was thirty the encouragement which the public offered to his dramatic writings was so great that he resigned his connection with the state. From the age of twenty-one he had been the composer of innumerable operettas and librettos; after 1860, mostly in collaboration with his old schoolfellow and intimate friend Henri Meilhac (1831–'97). Among those burlesque plays, written to Offenbach's music, some achieved a universal popularity, especially "Orphée aux Enfers," 1861; "La*

Belle Hélène," 1865; "La Vie Parisienne," 1866; "La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein," 1867; and "Les Brigands," 1870. M. Halévy took an active part in the Franco-German War, and he published a vigorous account of what he experienced, entitled "L'Invasion." When he returned to literature, it was mainly as a novelist, although he continued to bring out operas in conjunction with Jacques Offenbach (1819–'80) until near the end of the life of that composer, and comedies with Meilhac until about the same time. His earliest collection of prose fiction, which attracted wide attention, was "Monsieur et Madame Cardinal," 1873. This was followed by "Marcel," 1876; "Les Petits Cardinal," 1880; "Un Mariage d'Amour," 1881; "L'Abbé Constantin," 1882; "Criquette," 1883; "Deux Mariages," 1883; "Princesse," 1886; and "Coup de Foudre," 1886. Halévy was elected to the French Academy in 1884, and since that time he has scarcely added anything to his literary production. He lives in retirement at 22 Rue de Douai, Paris.

E. G.

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ABBÉ CONSTANTIN

CHAPTER I

An old priest was walking briskly and resolutely under a broiling sun. The Abbé Constantin had been for more than thirty years Curé of the quiet little village of Souvigny, in the plain down yonder, skirted by a small stream called the Lizotte.

He had been walking for a quarter of an hour along the wall of the Château de Longueval. As he reached the high iron entrance-gate, which was supported by two massive pillars of heavy stones, worn out by time, he stopped and gazed sadly on two immense blue bills that were stuck on the wall. These placards announced that on Wednesday, the 18th of May, 1881, at one o'clock in the afternoon, the unreserved sale by auction of Longueval estate, divided into four lots, was to take place at a special sitting of the Magistrate of Souvigny Civil Court:

First. "The Château, with all its outhouses

and appurtenances, beautiful sheets of water, vast stables, park of one hundred and fifty acres, inclosed by walls and traversed by the river Lizotte; reserve price, six hundred thousand francs."

Second. "The farm of Blanche-Couronne, three hundred acres; reserve price, five hundred thousand francs."

Third. "The farm of the Roseraie, two hundred and fifty acres; reserve price, four hundred thousand francs."

Fourth. "The forest of full-grown trees of the Mionne, extending over four hundred and fifty acres; reserve price, five hundred and fifty thousand francs."

These amounts, added at the bottom of the placard, gave the high total of two millions and fifty thousand francs.

So it was to be divided, that splendid estate that for two centuries had escaped parcelling out, and had always been transmitted from generation to generation of the Longueval family. True, the placard announced that, after the preliminary and temporary sale by auction of the four lots, the highest bidder would have the privilege of bidding for the whole estate; but it was an enormous sum, and, according to all appearances, no purchaser would present himself.

The Marquise de Longueval had been dead six months. In 1873 she had lost her only son, Robert de Longueval; the three heirs were the Marquise's grandchildren—Pierre, Hélene, and Camille. It was necessary that the estate should be put up for sale; Hélene and Camille were both under age; and Pierre, a young man of twenty, having led an extravagant life and squandered half his money, was unable to maintain it.

Twelve o'clock was striking. In an hour the Château de Longueval would have a new proprietor. Who would he be? What lady would occupy the Marquise's place in the large drawing-room, hung with ancient tapestry? It was she who had undertaken to furnish and keep supplied the drug-store and the medicines which were constantly in requisition at the vicarage, and were under the care of Pauline, the Curé's old servant.

It was she who, twice a week, in her large landau full of children's little garments and woollen petticoats, used to come and take the Abbé Constantin out driving, and accompany him in what she called, "*La chasse aux pauvres.*"

While walking along, the old priest was also thinking—the greatest saints have their little weaknesses—of his cherished habits of thirty

years past, now suddenly interrupted. Every Thursday and Sunday he had been in the habit of dining at the Château. How much they had made of him, how he had been petted, pampered! Little Camille, who was then eight years old, would sit on his knees and prattle:

"You know, M. le Curé, I mean to be married in your church, and granny will send plenty of flowers, enough to fill up the whole church—more than for the month of Mary. It will be like a big garden—all white, all white, all white!"

The month of Mary! It was now the month of Mary. Formerly the altar used to be covered with flowers brought from the hot-houses of the Château. This year there was nothing there except a few miserable bouquets of lily-of-the-valley and white lilac in gilded china vases. Formerly, every Sunday at high mass, and every evening during the month of Mary, Mlle. Hébert, Mme. de Longueval's companion, used to preside over the small harmonium, which had been given by the Marquise. The now silent harmonium no longer accompanied the voices of the singers.

Mlle. Marbeau, the postmistress, was a little musical, and very willingly would she have taken

the place of Mlle. Hébert; but she dared not—she was afraid of being "shown up" as a bigot by the Mayor, who was himself a free-thinker. It might have retarded her promotion.

The Abbé had just passed the wall that surrounded the park, every corner of which was familiar to him. The road now followed the bank of the Lizotte, and on the other side of the river stretched the farm meadows, and beyond, the Mionne's forest of full-grown trees.

Parcelled out—the estate was to be parcelled out: this thought broke the poor priest's heart. For him, all that was part and parcel was indivisible. He was rather inclined to consider himself joint-owner of that estate. More than once had he stopped complaisantly before some cornfield, plucked an ear and said to himself, "That is right, the corn is splendid, plump and full. We shall have a good harvest this year." And joyfully would he resume his walk across "his" fields, "his" plains, "his" meadows. In short, by everything in his life, by all his habits, all his remembrances, he belonged to that estate of which the end had come.

The Abbé could see in the distance the farm of Blanche-Couronne; its red-tiled roofs stood out against the green background of the forest.

There again the Curé could feel at home. Bernard, the Marquise's farmer, was his friend, and after the old priest had been going round among his sick and poor, and the sun was nearing the horizon, if he grew tired and felt hungry, he would stop and have supper with Bernard, relish a nice "fricot de lard et de pommes de terre," and empty his tankard of cider. Then, after supper, the farmer would harness his old black mare and drive the Curé home.

All along the way they would chatter and argue. The Curé would reproach the farmer for not attending church, and the latter would answer: "The wife and girls attend the service for me, you know, M. le Curé; you know it is so at home. Women have religion for men. They will get the doors of Paradise opened for us." Then slyly he would add, gently striking the black mare with his whip, "If there is one."

The Curé would start up in the old gig and exclaim: "What! If there is one? Most certainly there is one."

"Then you will be there, sir! You say it is not sure; but I say it is. I maintain you will be there—standing at the door, watching for your parishioners, and continuing to look after our lit-

tle affairs. And you will say to St. Peter—for it is St. Peter who keeps the keys of Paradise, is it not——?"

"Yes, it is."

"Well, you will say to St. Peter, if he tries to shut me out under pretext that I never attended mass, you will say to him, 'Bah, let him pass just the same. It is Bernard, the Marquise's farmer—a good fellow. He was a town councillor, and he voted for retaining the nuns, whom some Radicals wanted to send away from the school.' That will touch St. Peter, who will answer, 'Well, pass on, Bernard, but it is only for your dear old Curé's sake.' For up there you will still be our Curé of Longueval. You would not enjoy Paradise if it prevented you from being Curé of Longueval."

Curé of Longueval! Yes; all through his life he had been nothing else, had dreamed of nothing else, and never had wanted any preferment. On three or four occasions he had been offered very important livings, with good incomes, in a distant town. He had refused them. He liked his little church, his little vicarage. He was there by himself, managing all alone, going about in all weathers—sun, rain, wind, and hail. He had grown inured, but his soul had remained

simple and child-like. He was living at the vicarage, a very rustic-looking house, only separated from the church by the cemetery. When the Curé mounted the ladder to train up his pear-trees to the wall, there, over the top of the wall, he could see the graves over which he had said the last prayers, and into which he had thrown the first spadeful of earth. Then, while gardening, he would say a short prayer for those of the dead for whom he felt anxious, and who might be retained in Purgatory. His was a simple and sincere faith.

Among those graves there was one which oftener than any other had his visits and his prayers. This was the grave of his old friend, Dr. Reynaud, who died in his arms in 1871—and in what sad circumstances! The doctor was like Bernard, he neither attended mass nor confession, but he was so kind, so charitable, so pitiful to the suffering.

This was the Curé's great anxiety and trouble. His friend Reynaud—where was he? Then he would remember the country doctor's noble life, full of courage and self-sacrifice; he would remember his death, above all his death, and would say to himself, "In Paradise; he can be nowhere but in Paradise. God perhaps sent him a short

time to Purgatory—just for form's sake—but certainly he rescued him after a few minutes."

All this was passing through the old man's mind while he was walking on his way towards Souvigny. He was going to town in order to inquire who were the new proprietors of Longueval. He had a mile more to walk before reaching the first houses in Souvigny, and he was following the walls of Lavardens Park when he heard above his head a voice calling him, "M. le Curé! M. le Curé."

At this place, bordering the wall, a long avenue of lime-trees formed a terrace, and the Abbé, raising his head, saw Mme. de Lavardens and her son Paul.

"Where are you going, M. le Curé?" asked the Comtesse.

"To the Court House at Souvigny, Comtesse, to inquire."

"Stay with us. M. de Sarnac is to come after the sale to tell us all about it."

The Abbé Constantin went on to the terrace.

Gertrude de Lannilis, Comtesse de Lavardens, had been very unfortunate. When eighteen, she committed an act of madness, the only one in her life, but an irreparable one. She fell desperately in love with, and married M. de La-

vardens, one of the most charming and fascinating men of his time. He was not in love with her, but married her only from necessity; he had squandered his inheritance, and for two or three years had been able to hold his head above water only by resorting to expedients. Mlle. de Lannilis knew all about that, and was under no illusion. "But," she said to herself, "I shall love him so much that he will end by loving me."

From that time dated all her sorrows. Her existence might have been bearable had she loved her husband less, but the excess of her tenderness only bored him. He returned to his former dissolute life. And so fifteen years passed in a long martyrdom, borne by Mme. de Lavardens with all outward and stoical resignation—resignation, however, that was not in her heart. Nothing succeeded in curing her of that love, which eventually broke her heart.

M. de Lavardens died in 1869. He left a son fourteen years old, who had inherited all the impetuous passions of his father. Although not entirely wasted, Mme. de Lavardens's fortune was not a little compromised and diminished. She sold her mansion in Paris, retired into the country, and lived carefully and economically,

devoting herself entirely to the education of her son.

But there again sorrows and troubles were in store for her. Paul de Lavardens was a nice boy, amiable and intelligent, but quite uncontrollable. He was the despair of three or four private tutors, who struggled hard, but without success, to drum something serious into his head. He presented himself for admission to the military school of Saint Cyr, was plucked, and began to squander in Paris, as recklessly as possible, two or three hundred thousand francs. After that he enlisted in the first regiment of the *Chasseurs d'Afrique*, had the good luck, for his début, to join a body of troops setting out for the Sahara, behaved himself bravely, rapidly became quartermaster, and at the end of three years was about to be promoted sub-lieutenant, when he fell in love with a young girl who was acting in *La Fille de Madame Angot* in an Algerian theatre.

When his term of service was over he left the army and returned to Paris, bringing the young opera-singer with him. Then it was a dancer—then an actress—then a circus-rider. He was not particular in his choice. He led the brilliant and contemptible life of an idler. He remained only three or four months in Paris.

His mother allowed him an income of thirty thousand francs a year, but had plainly declared that, during her lifetime, he should not have a penny more. He knew how strict his mother was, and how seriously he must interpret her words. But as he was desirous of keeping up an appearance in Paris, and of leading a gay life there, he spent his thirty thousand francs between March and May, and then returned with docility to a quiet and invigorating country life, hunting, fishing, and riding with the officers of the artillery regiment that was garrisoned at Souvigny. The little coquettish work-girls took the place of the little singers and actresses of Paris, although they did not cause them to be forgotten.

By taking a little trouble one could find *grisettes* in any provincial town, and Paul was willing to take the trouble.

As soon as the Curé was in Mme. de Lavardens's presence—"I can tell you," said she, addressing him, "without waiting for M. de Sarnac's arrival, who are the purchasers of Longueval. I feel perfectly easy about the matter, and don't doubt for a moment of the success of our plan. Not to quarrel without reason, we agreed, M. de Sarnac, M. Gallard, a wealthy, influential

banker of Paris, and I. M. de Sarnac will have the Mionne, M. Gallard the Château and Blanche-Couronne, and I the Roseraie. You are anxious about your poor, M. le Curé, I know. But don't fret about them. These Gallards are very wealthy people, and you will see what a lot of money you will get for your charities."

At that moment a carriage appeared in the distance amid a cloud of dust. "Here is M. de Sarnac," exclaimed Paul. "I know his ponies."

All three hurriedly descended the terrace and returned to the Château. They arrived at the same moment that the carriage stopped before the steps.

"Well?" Mme. de Lavardens asked.

"Well!" M. de Sarnac answered. "We own nothing! Nothing!"

"What do you mean?" asked Mme. de Lavardens, growing pale.

"Nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing, either of us," and M. de Sarnac, alighting from his trap, told them what had just been going on at the Civil Court of Souvigny.

"Everything," he said, "at first went on capitally. The Château was adjudicated to M. Gallard for six hundred thousand and fifty francs. It was not necessary to outbid by more than fifty

francs. On the other hand, a little contest took place about Blanche-Couronne. The bidding rose from five hundred thousand francs, and M. Gallard again won the day. A fresh contest arose about the Roseraie ; it was at last adjudicated to you, madame, for four hundred and fifty thousand francs, and I took up the forest of the Mionne, without opposition, with an outbidding of one hundred francs. All seemed over ; everybody was standing up ready to take leave ; our solicitors were surrounded by people anxious to know who the purchasers were. However, M. Brazier, the magistrate, who had been superintending the sale, cried out, 'Order ! Silence !' and the bailiff offered for sale the four lots together for two millions one hundred and fifty or sixty thousand francs—I don't remember exactly. An ironical murmur went round among the people assembled. From all sides one could hear, 'Nobody, there will be nobody.' But little Gilbert, the solicitor, who was seated in the first row, and who, up to then, had not stirred, rose and said quietly, 'I have a purchaser for the four lots together for two millions two hundred thousand francs.'

"Every one was thunder-struck. There was a great clamour, soon followed by a great silence.

The room was full of farmers and agriculturists residing in the neighbourhood. So much money for land; that threw them into a sort of respectful stupor.

"However, M. Gallard bent towards M. Sandrier, the solicitor who had been bidding. The struggle began between Gilbert and Sandrier. The bids rose to two millions five hundred thousand francs. M. Gallard hesitated for one moment, then made up his mind and continued up to three millions. Then he stopped, and the estate was adjudicated to Gilbert. Every one rushed to him and crowded round him until he was nearly suffocated. 'The name, the purchaser's name?'

"'It is an American,' answered Gilbert; 'Mme. Scott.'"

"Mme. Scott!" exclaimed Paul de Lavardens.

"You know her?" asked Mme. de Lavardens.

"Do I know her? Do I?—Not at all. But I was at a ball at her house six weeks ago."

"At a ball at her house—and you don't know her, you say. What sort of woman is she, then?"

"Lovely, charming, bewitching—a wonder!"

"And she is married—M. Scott does really exist?"

"Certainly—a tall, fair man. He was at his ball. He was pointed out to me. He was looking carelessly at everybody. He was not amusing himself, I can tell you. Gazing at random, he seemed to be saying to himself, 'Who on earth are those people? What business have they here?' We had come to see Mme. Scott and Miss Percival—Mme. Scott's sister—and it was well worth the while."

"These Scotts," said Mme. de Lavardens, addressing M. de Sarnac, "do you know them?"

"Yes, madame, I know them. M. Scott is an immensely rich American, who came to settle in Paris last year. As soon as his name was pronounced, I knew we were out of the bidding. Gallard couldn't but be beaten. The Scotts first bought a private mansion, near the Park Monceau in Paris, which was worth two millions."

"Yes. Rue Murillo," said Paul. "I went to a ball at their house. I say it was——"

"Let M. de Sarnac speak. You can give us the account of your ball at Mme. Scott's afterward."

"Then these Americans settled down in Paris," continued M. de Sarnac, "and the golden

rain began. They were regular parvenus, and amused themselves by making ducks and drakes of their money. Their enormous fortune is quite new. It is said that ten years ago Mme. Scott was begging in the streets of New York."

"She has been begging?"

"They say so, madame. Then she married this Scott, the son of a New York banker, and suddenly a lawsuit they gained put into their hands, not millions only, but heaps of millions. They have a silver mine somewhere in America, a genuine mine, in which there is silver. Oh, you will see some luxury soon at Longueval. We shall all the rest of us look like paupers. I have been told that they have a hundred thousand francs to spend a day."

"These are our neighbours," exclaimed Mme. de Lavardens. "An adventuress! That is nothing. But a heretic! M. l'Abbé—a Protestant, a heretic, a Protestant!!!" It was that, indeed, of which he had immediately thought on hearing the words, "an American—Mme. Scott."

The new châtelaine would not attend mass. What mattered to him her millions? She was not a Roman Catholic. He could not baptize the children born at Longueval, and the chapel of the Château, where he had so often said mass,

would be transformed into a Protestant church, where chilling sermons from some Calvinist or Lutheran pastor would be heard.

The only one of the three who was not disappointed and upset was Paul de Lavardens. He seemed delighted.

"A lovely heretic, at any rate," said he, "and even two lovely heretics, if you please. You should see them riding in the Bois accompanied by two Liliputian grooms no bigger than that."

"Come, now, Paul, let us hear about that ball you were talking of just now. How did you happen to go to the ball at those Americans'?"

"By the greatest chance! It was Aunt Valentine's 'at home' that evening. I arrived about ten o'clock—and indeed Aunt Valentine's 'at homes' are not very entertaining. I had been there for twenty minutes, when I caught sight of Roger de Puymartin, who was taking French leave.

"'Let us come in together,' said I.

"'Oh, I am not going back.'

"'Where are you going to, then?'

"'To a ball.'

"'At whose house?'

"'The Scotts'. Come with me.'

"'But I am not invited.'

"'Nor I either.'

"'What do you mean?'

"'I mean to say that I do not know them, but I am going to meet a friend of mine who will take me there.'

"'And does your friend know the Scotts?'

"'Hardly; but enough to introduce us both. Do come. You will see Mme. Scott.'

"'Oh! I have seen her on horseback in the Bois.'

"'But she is not *décolletée* on horseback. You did not see her shoulders—and it is her shoulders that one ought to see. Upon my word, there is nothing better in Paris just now.'

"Well, I went to the ball, and I saw Mme. Scott's yellow hair and white shoulders, and I hope to see them again when there is a ball at Longueval."

"Paul!" interrupted Mme. de Lavardens in a reproachful tone, pointing to the Abbé.

"Oh, M. l'Abbé, I beg your pardon. Did I say anything foolish? No, I don't think I did."

The poor priest had not heard. His thoughts were elsewhere. He was already picturing to himself the chaplain of the Château calling at

each house in the village, and slipping evangelistic tracts under the door.

Resuming his tale, Paul began an enthusiastic description of the mansion, which was a marvel of magnificence.

"What bad taste to show off so!" said Mme. de Lavardens.

"Not at all, mother, not at all! Nothing loud or showy. Most tasteful arrangements. An incomparable hot-house, resplendent with electric light, and the refreshment tables placed inside, under a trellis loaded with grapes—in April—and people could pick them!

"The accessories for the cotillon had, they said, cost forty thousand francs—all sorts of charming knick-knacks, which the guests were supposed to take away. Did not do so myself, but many guests were not sparing with them. Puymartin that evening told me Mme. Scott's story, only it was not quite the same as M. de Sarnac's. Roger told me that Mme Scott had been kidnapped, when still a baby, by mountebanks, and that she had been found again by her father, flying through paper hoops and performing all sorts of feats of leaping in an itinerant circus."

"A circus-rider!" exclaimed Mme. de Lavar-

dens, in despair. "I would rather have the beggar!"

"And while Roger was telling me this wonderfully sensational story—a novel worthy of being published in the *Petit Journal*—I perceived the circus-rider at the bottom of the gallery. She was in a marvellous cloud of satin and lace, and I admired her shoulders, on which flashed a diamond necklace, with stones as large as pigeons' eggs. It was said that the Minister of Finance had secretly sold half of the Crown diamonds to Mme. Scott, and that was why he had fifteen millions surplus in the budget in the following month. Added to that, she had a very dignified appearance, and seemed quite at home in the midst of all her splendour."

Paul was going on at such a rate that his mother could not stop him. Before M. de Sarnac, who was very disappointed, he showed too plainly his delight at the prospect of having that wonderful American as a neighbour.

The Abbé Constantin prepared to return to Longueval, but Paul, seeing him about to depart, exclaimed, "Oh! no, no, M. l'Abbé, you must not think of walking back. It is too far—and in such a heat, too! Allow me to drive you. It grieves me very much to see you so depressed.

I wish I could cheer you up a little. Oh! although you are a saint, I make you laugh sometimes with my nonsense."

Half an hour later, the Curé and Paul were driving towards the village. Paul kept chattering away without ceasing. His mother was no longer there to calm down his excitement. He could not contain his joy.

"Indeed, M. l'Abbé, you should not worry yourself about the matter. Look at my little mare, how well she goes! How nicely she lifts up her legs! You do not know her yet, do you? Guess how much I paid for her. Four hundred francs. I discovered her a fortnight ago between the shafts of a market-gardener's cart. When once she is in the swing, she will go twelve miles an hour, and give me enough to do to hold her in all the time. Look! Do look how she pulls! Doesn't she? Gently, gently! You are not in a hurry are you, M. le Curé? Shall we drive through the woods? It would do you good to get the fresh air. If you only knew, M. l'Abbé, what affection I have for you, and what respect. I hope I did not chatter too much nonsense before you just now? I should be so sorry if I did!"

"No, my boy, I heard nothing."

"Then we are going to play truant."

After having taken a short turn to the left in the woods, Paul recurred to his first idea:

"I was saying, M. le Curé, that you should not take these things so tragically. Do you want me to tell you what I think? Well, it is very lucky indeed. I would rather have the Scotts than the Gallards at Longueval. Didn't you hear M. de Sarnac just now reproaching them for spending their money foolishly? It is not folly to spend one's money; it is folly to keep it. Your poor—for it is of your poor that you chiefly think, I am sure—well, your poor have done well to-day. This is my opinion. Religion? yes, religion. They will not attend mass! That grieves you, of course, but they will give you heaps of money, and you will accept it, and you will be quite right there. You see you don't say you will not. Gold will flow all over the country, and that will bring life and pleasure, four-in-hands, postillions with powdered wigs, paper-chases, hunting, balls, fireworks—and here in this wood, in this very avenue where we are driving, I shall perhaps find Paris again before long. I shall see the two Amazons and the two little grooms whom I was speaking about! If you knew how lovely the sisters are when riding!

One morning in Paris I rode all round the Bois de Boulogne behind them. I can still picture them to myself. They wore gray hats *à haute forme*, with little black veils drawn tightly over their faces, and long riding-habits, not made in the ordinary fashion, but with one long seam following the line of the back, and women who venture to wear such habits as these must have splendid figures! because you know, M. l'Abbé, with habits without seams no deception is possible."

For a few minutes the Curé did not pay attention to Paul's speeches. The carriage was going down a straight lane, at the end of which the Abbé saw a rider who was coming forward at a gallop.

"Look!" said he; "do look! Your eyes are better than mine. Is it not Jean coming here?"

"So it is. I recognise his gray mare!"

Paul was very fond of horses, and always noticed the horse before the rider.

In fact it was Jean, who, on catching sight of them from afar, waved his *kepi*, which had two bands of gold around it. Jean was a lieutenant in the artillery regiment garrisoned at Souvigny. A moment later he stopped near the little trap, and addressed the Curé:

"I have just called on you, godfather, and Pauline told me that you had been to Souvigny to inquire about the sale. Well, who has got the Château?"

"An American lady—Mme. Scott."

"And Blanche-Couronne?"

"The same—Mme. Scott."

"And the Roseraie?"

"Still Mme. Scott."

"And the forest—always Mme. Scott?"

"As you say," replied Paul; "and I know Mme. Scott, and we are going to amuse ourselves at Longueval. I will introduce you. But it grieves M. le Curé very much; because she is an American—a Protestant."

"Ah, so it is, poor godfather! Well, we will talk about it to-morrow. I will come and have lunch with you. I told Pauline I am on duty for the week, and must be at the barracks by three. I have no time to spare now."

"For *la botte?*" said Paul.

"Quite so. Good-bye, Paul."

"Till to-morrow, godfather."

The artillery lieutenant galloped on; Paul gave his little mare her head.

"What a good fellow Jean is!" said Paul.

"Yes, indeed."

"There is no one better than Jean in the whole world!"

"No, no one better."

The Curé turned round and glanced at Jean as he disappeared into the depths of the woods.

"Oh, yes, there is yourself, M. le Curé."

"No, not me, not me."

"Well, M. le Curé, shall I tell you that there are no better people in the world than you two? Oh, look there—the nice bit of road. I will let Niniche gallop—I call her Niniche."

Paul, with the end of his whip, lightly caressed Niniche, who began to gallop at full speed, and then he joyfully exclaimed:

"Just look how she lifts up her legs, M. le Curé! Do look how she lifts up her legs—and so regularly, as if moved by machinery. Lean forward a little bit and look."

The Abbé, to please Paul, leaned a little to see how Niniche lifted her legs. But he was thinking of something else.

CHAPTER II

THIS artillery lieutenant was Jean Reynaud. He was the son of the country doctor whose body lay at rest in Longueval churchyard. In 1846, when Abbé Constantin came and took possession of his little living, a Dr. Reynaud, Jean's grandfather, was living in a lovely little cottage that stood on the Souvigny road, between the two Châteaux de Longueval and Lavardens. Marcel, the doctor's son, was at that time finishing his medical studies in Paris. He was a steady worker and of wonderful ability. He obtained the highest marks and honours in the open competitions for the certificate of fellowship, and he resolved to remain in Paris and establish a practice there. The most brilliant future seemed open before him, when, in 1852, the news was broken to him that his father had died, seized by an apoplectic fit. Marcel, who had worshipped his father, returned to Longueval broken-hearted. He spent one month with his mother, and at the end of that time told her

the necessity there was for him to go back to Paris.

"If it is necessary," said his mother, "you must go."

"What do you mean? Do you expect me to leave you here alone? I shall take you with me."

"I, go to live in Paris? Leave this country where I was born—where your father lived and died? I never shall be able to do it, my child, never. Go alone, if your prospects and your life are there. I know you never will forget me, and you will often come to see me—very often."

"No, mother," he answered, "I shall remain with you"—and he remained. His hopes and ambitions all in one moment vanished. He saw only one thing—the duty of not abandoning his aged mother. In duty, simply accepted and performed, he found happiness. After all, it is in duty only that happiness can be found.

Marcel accommodated himself with good grace and goodwill to his new existence. He continued his father's life, entering the groove at the very spot where he had left it. He devoted himself entirely and without regret to the unthankful career of a country doctor. His father left him a small plot of land and a little money.

He led a very homely life, and devoted half of his time and attention to the poor, from whom he never would accept a penny. This was his only luxury.

He met in this way a girl, charming, but penniless, and quite alone in the world. He married her. This was in 1855, and in the following year there were both joy and sorrow in store for him. His son was born and his old mother died. Abbé Constantin, at the interval of six weeks, stood godfather to the boy, and performed the last office rites of the Church for the grandmother. Frequent meetings at the bedsides of the sick and suffering had drawn the priest and the doctor together in friendly bonds. They instinctively felt that they belonged to the same race—the race of the tender, the just, and the benevolent.

Jean grew up. He had his first lessons in grammar from his father, and his godfather taught him Latin. He was intelligent and industrious, and his progress was so rapid that the two professors—especially the Curé—found themselves a little embarrassed at the end of a few years. The pupil became much too clever for his teachers. It was about this time that the Comtesse came to settle down at Lavardens,

after the death of her husband. She brought with her a tutor for her son Paul, who was a nice little fellow, but very lazy. The two boys were of the same age; they had known one another from infancy. Mme. de Lavardens was fond of Dr. Reynaud. One day she suggested, "Send Jean to me every morning. I will send him home in the evening. Paul's tutor is a very distinguished man; he will make our two boys work. It will be good for both boys. Jean will set a good example to Paul." So the matter was settled. The little *bourgeois* did, in fact, set the little aristocrat an excellent example in the matter of work and industry, but this excellent example was not followed.

War broke out. On the 14th of November, at seven o'clock in the morning, the soldiers drafted for active service gathered in the market-place. Abbé Constantin acted as chaplain, and Dr. Reynaud as military surgeon. The same idea had come to them both at the same time. The priest was sixty-two and the doctor fifty.

On the march outwards, the battalion took the road that traversed Longueval, and passed by the doctor's house. Mme. Reynaud and Jean were waiting by the side of the road. The child

threw himself into his father's arms. "Take me with you, father; do take me with you." Mme. Reynaud was in tears. The doctor kissed them both hastily, and went on his way.

A hundred steps from there, the road took a sharp turn. Dr. Reynaud stopped short and threw a long look at his wife and son. That was the last. He never saw them again.

On the 8th of January, 1871, the *mobilisés* of Souvigny attacked the village of Villersexell, occupied by the Prussians, who had razed the walls and barricaded themselves in the houses. A soldier who was marching in the front row received a bullet full in the chest, and fell to the ground. There was a moment's stir and excitement. "Forward! Forward!" shouted the officers. The men stepped over their comrade's body, and, under a shower of bullets, entered the village. Dr. Reynaud and the Abbé Constantin were marching with the troops. They stopped near the wounded man. The blood was coming out of his mouth.

"Nothing to be done," said the doctor; "it is for you now to save his soul." The priest knelt down by the side of the dying man, and the doctor went on in the direction of the village. He had not taken ten steps when he sud-

denly stopped, threw up his arms, struggled, and fell to the ground like a log. He was dead, killed by a bullet that had entered his temple. The priest ran and caught him in his arms.

That same evening the village was taken, and, on the morrow, the body of Dr. Reynaud was laid in the little cemetery at Villersexell. Two months later, Abbé Constantin brought back to Longueval the coffin of his friend, and behind that coffin walked an orphan—Jean had lost his mother also. At the news of her husband's death she fainted, and remained twenty-four hours unconscious, utterly crushed down, wordless and tearless. Then fever set in, followed by delirium, and at the end of fifteen days she was dead.

Jean was fourteen years old, and alone in the world. Of all that family, every member of which for centuries had been good and honest, only one child remained—a child kneeling down on a grave, who gave promise of being what his father and grandfather had been—good and honest. There are many such families in France; our unfortunate country is, on many points, cruelly calumniated by certain novelists, who paint it in very violent and exaggerated colours. True, the history of good people is more often

than not dull and uninteresting. This story proves it.

Jean remained a long time depressed and quiet. The Abbé Constantin took him to the Vicarage. One afternoon, which had been cold and rainy, Jean was seated by the fire, and the priest was reading his breviary. Pauline was going in and out, putting things in order. An hour had elapsed without a word being spoken, when Jean suddenly raised his head.

"Godfather," said he, "my father has left me some money, has he not?"

So strange was the question that the Abbé, in bewilderment, thought he had not understood.

"You ask me if your father——"

"I ask you, godfather, if my father has left me any money?"

"Yes, he must have left you some."

"Very much, isn't it? I often heard them say in the country that my father was rich. Tell me how much he has left me."

"I don't know indeed; you ask me things——"

The poor priest felt broken-hearted. Such a question at such a moment! He, however, fancied he knew Jean's heart, and in that heart there was no room for mercenary thoughts.

"I entreat you, godfather, do tell me," in-

sisted Jean, gently. "I will explain to you afterward why I ask you this."

"Well, they say that your father had two or three hundred thousand francs."

"And it is a lot of money?"

"Yes, it is a lot of money."

"And all that money is mine?"

"Yes, all that money is yours."

"Ah, I am glad of it, because the day that my father was killed over there during the war, the Prussians killed the son of a poor woman at Longueval—Mother Clément, you know. They also killed Rosalie's brother, with whom I used to play when a little boy. Well, as I am rich and they are poor, I mean to share with Mother Clément and Rosalie the money my father left me."

On hearing these words the Curé rose up, took Jean into his arms, and his white hair mingled with the fair hair of the boy. Two big tears fell from the old priest's eyes, slowly rolled down his cheeks, and glided into the wrinkles. However, he was obliged to explain to Jean that, although he was the possessor of his father's inheritance, he had not yet the right to dispose of it as he chose. He was going to have a guardian.

"You, most likely, godfather."

"No, not I, my child; a priest has no right to exercise guardianship. I think they will choose M. Lenient, the solicitor of Souvigny, who was one of your father's best friends. You can speak to him and tell him what you wish."

M. Lenient was, in fact, appointed by the family council to fulfil the functions of guardianship.

Jean's persistence was so eager and so touching that the solicitor consented to take out of the income every year till Jean was of age the sum of three thousand four hundred francs, to be divided between Mother Clément and little Rosalie.

Mme. de Lavardens, under the circumstances, behaved splendidly. She went to the Abbé Constantin. "Give me Jean," said she; "give him to me entirely till the end of his studies. I will bring him back to you every year during the holidays. It is not a favour that I confer upon you, but one that I ask from you. I wish nothing better for my boy. I am resigned to abandon Lavardens for a time; Paul is anxious to become a soldier, to enter the military school of Saint Cyr. It is only at Paris that I can find suitable masters. I shall take both children with

me ; they shall be brought up together, as brothers, under my care. I will not make any difference between them, you may be sure of that."

It was difficult not to accept such a proposal. The old Curé would fain have kept Jean with him, and his heart ached at the thought of parting with him. But what about the child's interests ? This was all that ought to be considered. The rest mattered not. Jean was summoned. "My child," said Mme. de Lavardens to him, "will you come to live with me and Paul for a few years ? I shall take you both to Paris."

"It is very kind of you, madame, but I would rather remain here."

He looked at the Curé, who turned his eyes away.

"Why go ?" he continued. "Why take us —Paul and me ?"

"Because it is only in Paris that you can finish your studies properly. Paul will prepare for his examination for Saint Cyr. You know that he wishes to be a soldier."

"So do I, madame. I wish to be a soldier."

"You, a soldier?" said the Curé. "But it was not your father's idea. He spoke very often of your future prospects, of your career. You were

to be a doctor, and a country doctor at Longueval as he was, and to attend upon the poor, as he did, Jean, my boy, remember."

"I do remember, indeed."

"Well, then, you must do what your father wished. It is your duty, Jean; it is, really. You must go to Paris. You would rather remain here—that I understand—but it cannot be. You must go to Paris and work, work hard. It is not that which causes me anxiety. You have the same noble feelings your father had. You will be an honest and hard-working man. One cannot be one without the other. And, one day, in your grandfather's house, at this very place where he did so much good, the poor people of this country will find again a Dr. Reynaud who will also be a comfort to them. And if by chance I am still in this world, that day will be a happy one for me. But I am wrong to speak of myself. It is your father who must be thought of; I repeat it to you, Jean, it was his fondest wish; you cannot possibly forget it."

"No, indeed, I don't forget it; but if my father hears me and listens to me, I feel sure he understands me, for it is through him—that——"

"Through him?"

"Yes, when I heard he was dead, and the

way he had died, I said to myself that I would be a soldier—and I will be a soldier. Godfather, and you, madame, don't stop me, I entreat you, don't stop me!"

The child, burying his face in his hands, began to sob desperately. The Comtesse and the Abbé soothed him with gentle words. "Very well, very well, don't grieve; yes, you shall be a soldier."

They both had the same thoughts. "Let him prove it. Jean is still but a child; he will change his mind." But in that they were both mistaken—Jean did not change his mind.

In the month of September, 1876, Paul was plucked at Saint Cyr, and Jean gained the eleventh place at the entrance examination at the École Polytechnique. On the day when the list of the admitted candidates came out, he wrote to Abbé Constantin:

"I have passed, and passed well, too, for I mean to go into the army, and not into the Civil Service. No matter whether I keep my rank at school, that will do for one of my comrades. He can have my place."

And so it was. Jean did better than keep his rank. He came out seventh on the list. But in place of entering the school for public work,

he joined the school for artillery cadets at Fontainebleau in 1878.

He was one-and-twenty. He was of age, master of his fortune, and the first act of his administration was a very great expense. He bought for Mother Clément and little Rosalie, who was now grown up, two government securities of one thousand five hundred francs each. That cost him seventy thousand francs—about the same amount that Paul had spent on Mlle. Lise Bruyere, of the Palais Royal Theatre, the first year he was in Paris. Two years afterward, Jean came out head of the École de Fontainebleau, which gave him the right of choosing among the vacancies. There was one in the regiment barracked at Souvigny, and Souvigny was only three miles from Longueval. Jean asked for the place, and obtained it.

So it was that Jean Reynaud, lieutenant in the 9th artillery regiment, came in October, 1880, and took possession of Dr. Marcel Reynaud's house. So he found himself in the country where he had spent his childhood, and everybody remembered his father's life and death. Abbé Constantin had the joy of seeing again his friend's son. And to speak the truth, he was no longer opposed to Jean's being a soldier. When the

old Curé came out of church, after mass was over, and saw the clouds of dust flying on the road, when he felt the soil shaking under the rolling of the gun-carriages, he would stop like a child, well pleased to see the regiment pass by.

But, for him, the regiment was Jean. It was that robust and well-made rider, in whose features and gait could be seen strength, energy, and straightforwardness.

Jean, as soon as he caught sight of the Curé, would gallop up for a little chat with his godfather. His charger would then turn his head towards the Curé, for he knew well that there was always some sugar for him in the pocket of the old black, threadbare and patched cassock. The Abbé had a beautiful one, quite new, but that, he said, was for Sunday best—when he went into society.

When the trumpets of the regiment were heard, while the troops marched through the village, all eyes sought Jean—little Jean, for to the old people of Longueval he still remained little Jean. Some of the wrinkled and broken-down old peasants never had got out of the habit of saluting him, when he passed, with a "Hullo, my boy, how are you?" The boy was six feet high.

And Jean never passed through the village without seeing the old, withered face of Mother Clément and the laughing one of Rosalie at the window. The latter had married during the previous year. Jean had been best man, and on the night of the wedding had danced merrily with the girls of Longueval.

Such was the artillery lieutenant who, on the 19th of May, 1881, about five o'clock, stopped at the Vicarage garden. After having dismounted he entered, and his horse quietly went of his own accord into a shed in the back yard. Pauline was at the kitchen window; Jean went in and kissed her heartily on both cheeks.

"Good-morning, old Pauline! How are you?"

"I am all right, thanks. I am looking after your dinner. Shall I tell you what you will have? Some nice potato soup, a leg of mutton, and 'des œufs au lait.'"

"Capital! I like all that, and I am dying of hunger."

"And some salad that I forgot, and you will help me to gather the things presently. Dinner will be at half-past six exactly, because M. le Curé has his service at half-past seven tonight."

"Where is godfather?"

"In the garden. He is very depressed, M. le Curé, on account of yesterday's sale."

"Yes, I know, I know."

"It will cheer him up to see you. He is so happy when you are here. Mind! Loulou is going to nibble the climbing rose-trees. How hot he is!"

"Yes, I came by the longest route—round the wood—and I rode very fast."

Jean caught Loulou, who was getting nearer the climbing roses; he unsaddled and unbridled him, and fastened him under the little shed. That done, he rapidly rubbed him down with a wisp of straw. Then he entered the house, got rid of his sword, changed his hat for an old "five sous" straw one, and went to join the Curé in the garden.

Pauline was right, the unfortunate Curé was very depressed. He had not slept a wink the preceding night—he, whose sleep was usually so peaceful and childlike. He was broken-hearted. Longueval in the hands of a foreigner, an adventurer! Jean repeated what Paul had said the day before.

"You will have plenty of money for your poor people."

"Money! Yes, my poor will lose nothing; it may be they will gain. But that money, I shall have to go and ask for it; and in the drawing-room, too, instead of my dear old friend, I shall find that yellow-haired American. They say she has yellow hair. I must go, and will, for the sake of my poor—and she will give me some money, but she will give me nothing but money. The Marquise used to give me something else. She gave her time and her heart. We used to go together every week and visit the poor and sick.

"She knew all the sufferings and miseries in the country. And when I could not stir from my arm-chair through gout, she would make the round of visits by herself, as well, and better than I."

Pauline came and interrupted the conversation. She was carrying an enormous china basin, embellished with an elaborate, showy, floral design.

"Here I am," said she, "come to gather the salad. Jean, will you have curly lettuce or endive?"

"I like lettuce best," answered Jean, gaily. "It is a long time since I have eaten any."

"Well, you shall have some to-night. You just hold the basin."

Pauline began to cut her lettuce, and Jean held the large basin. The Curé was looking at them. At that moment a sound of harness-bells was heard ; a carriage, which creaked rather noisily, approached. The Abbé's garden was only separated from the road by a low hedge, breast high, in the middle of which was a little gate of open lattice-work.

All three looked up and saw a hired barouche of ancient build, drawn by two white horses, and driven by an old driver in a blouse. By the side of the driver stood a liveried footman, strictly methodical and correct in his manners and appearance. Two young ladies, wearing simple but elegant travelling costumes, were in the carriage.

When the carriage reached the garden gate, the driver stopped his horses, and addressing the Curé, "M. le Curé," said he, "these ladies wish to speak to you." Then, turning towards his fares, he added, "This is M. le Curé of Longueval."

The Abbé approached and opened the little door. The travellers alighted, glanced in surprise at the young officer, who stood there looking rather awkward, his straw hat in his right hand, and in his left one the large basin full of lettuce.

The two ladies entered the garden, and the elder, who might have been four-and-twenty, addressing the Abbé Constantin, said, with a pretty foreign accent :

" I must introduce myself, M. le Curé. I am Mme. Scott who yesterday bought the Château, and the farm, and the rest all round. I hope I am not disturbing you in any way, and that you can spare me a few moments." Then, pointing to her companion, " Miss Bettina Percival, my sister. You have guessed that already, I suppose ? We are very much like each other, are we not ? Ah, Bettina, we have forgotten our little bags that are in the carriage—and we shall want them."

" I will go and fetch them."

And Miss Percival prepared to go in search of the little bags. Jean said to her :

" Pray allow me, mademoiselle."

" I am so sorry, monsieur, to give you the trouble. The footman will let you have them. They are on the front seat."

She had the same accent as her sister, the same large, dark eyes, clear and bright, and the same hair—not yellow, but shining like gold in the sunlight. She bowed to Jean with a graceful smile, and the latter, having given the ba-

sin of lettuce to Pauline, went to fetch the bags.

Meanwhile Abbé Constantin, very much excited and perplexed, conducted the new châtelaines of Longueval into the Vicarage.

CHAPTER III

Longueval Vicarage was not a palace. The same room on the first floor that was used as a drawing-room served also for a dining-room. It opened into the kitchen by a door, which always stood wide open. This room was furnished in the scantiest manner—two old armchairs, six straw chairs, a sideboard, and a round table. Pauline had already laid the two plates for the Abbé and Jean.

Mme. Scott and Miss Percival walked about, gazing with childlike amusement at the Curé's domestic arrangements.

"I think the garden, the house, everything, is lovely," said Mme. Scott.

They both resolutely invaded the kitchen. The Abbé Constantin followed them, dumbfounded, amazed at the abruptness and suddenness of that American invasion. Old Pauline looked at the two strangers with an uneasy and distrustful expression. So here they are, she thought to herself, these heretics, unsaved souls,

and with trembling hands she went on picking her lettuce.

"I congratulate you very much, madame," said Bettina, addressing the old servant; "your little kitchen is very smart and tidy.—Well, Suzie, isn't it exactly the ideal vicarage that you wished for?"

"And the Curé as well," continued Mme. Scott. "Yes, indeed, M. le Curé, allow me to say so. If you only knew how glad I am that you are that kind of man. Bettina, what did I tell you in the train on our way here, and again just now, in the carriage?"

"My sister said to me, M. le Curé, that what she wished for, above all, was a Curé neither young, nor gloomy, nor stern; a Curé with white hair, and looking kind and gentle."

"And you are exactly our ideal, M. le Curé. No, we could not find a better. Excuse me, I pray you, for speaking so plainly; Parisian ladies have the art of putting things so prettily. I cannot, and when speaking French find it difficult to get out of my way of plain speaking. However, I am pleased, very pleased, M. le Curé, and I hope that you will be satisfied also with your new parishioners."

"My parishioners!" exclaimed the Curé, once

again finding life, movement, words; all of which, for the last two minutes, had deserted him. "My parishioners! I beg your pardon, madame, mademoiselle; I am so surprised. Can it be possible that you are Roman Catholics?"

"Yes, indeed, we are Roman Catholics."

"Roman Catholics! Roman Catholics!" exclaimed old Pauline, who appeared on the kitchen threshold, her arms lifted up, her face beaming with complete satisfaction.

Mme. Scott looked at the Curé and Pauline, astonished that her words produced such an effect.

Then Jean returned, bringing with him the two little bags. The Curé and Pauline greeted him with the same words.

"Roman Catholics! Roman Catholics!"

"Ah, I see," said Mme. Scott, laughing; "being Americans, you thought we must be Protestants. Not at all; our mother was a Canadian and a Roman Catholic; that is why my sister and I speak French, with a foreign accent, and with certain Americanisms, but still plainly enough to say all that we wish to say. My husband, although he is a Protestant, lets me have my way, and my two children are Roman Cath-

olics. That is why, M. le Curé, we meant to pay you a visit on our arrival."

"For that," Bettina resumed, "and for something else. But, for that other thing, our little bags are necessary."

"Here they are, mademoiselle," said Jean.

"This one is mine."

"And here is mine."

While the little bags were passing from hand to hand, the Curé introduced Jean to the two Americans; but he was still so bewildered that the introduction was not strictly correct. The Curé forgot one thing, and a very important one in an introduction—he did not mention Jean's surname.

"This is Jean," said he, "my godson, lieutenant in the artillery regiment garrisoned at Souvigny. He is at home here."

Jean made two low bows, which the two Americans acknowledged with slight ones, after which they began searching in their bags, out of which they each drew a roll of two thousand francs neatly inclosed in crocodile-skin cases encircled with golden rings.

"This is for your poor, M. le Curé," said Mme. Scott.

"And this also," said Bettina.

They gently slipped their offerings into the Curé's hands, and the latter, glancing alternately at his right and left hands, thought to himself, "What are these little things? How heavy they are! There must be gold inside. Yes, but how much? how much?"

The Abbé Constantin was seventy-two, and a lot of money had passed through his hands; not to stop a very long time, it is true; but money had come to him in small sums, and he could not get over such an offering as this. Two thousand francs! Never had it been his lot before to take hold of two thousand francs, nor even one thousand. Not realizing fully what he had received, the Curé knew not how to express his thanks. He stammered out:

"I am very much obliged to you, madame; you are very kind, mademoiselle."

Still he did not thank enough. Jean thought it necessary to interfere.

"Godfather, these ladies have just given you two thousand francs."

Then, overwhelmed with emotion and gratitude, the Curé exclaimed:

"Two thousand francs! two thousand francs for my poor!" Pauline suddenly reappeared. "Two thousand francs! two thousand francs! I

can hardly believe it," continued the Curé; "I can hardly believe it. Look, Pauline, take this money and see to it."

Old Pauline fulfilled many offices in the household, those of general servant, cook, manageress of the dispensary, and treasurer of the charity fund being among them. With unsteady hands she received those two small cases which meant many miseries relieved, many sorrows comforted.

"That is not all, M. le Curé," said Mme. Scott; "I shall give you five hundred francs every month."

"And I shall do the same as my sister."

"A thousand francs every month. There will be no more poor in the country, then."

"Just so. I am rich, very rich, and so is my sister! She is richer even than I am, because a young girl has some difficulty in spending money, while I—dear me! I spend all that I can —all! When one has heaps of money, too much money, more than it is right to have, tell me, M. le Curé, is there any better means of winning forgiveness than to give away as liberally as one can? Besides, you too can give me something." And addressing Pauline: "Will you be so kind, mademoiselle, as to bring me a glass of

water. No, nothing else—a glass of cold water —I am dying of thirst."

"And I," said Bettina, laughing, while Pauline ran out for a glass of water, "I am dying of something else; it is of hunger that I am dying. M. le Curé, it is dreadfully intrusive, I know, but I see your table is laid. Will you not ask us to dinner?"

"Bettina!" exclaimed Mme. Scott.

"It is all right, Suzie. You don't mind, M. le Curé, do you?"

But the old Curé answered nothing. He was more and more bewildered. They were taking his vicarage by storm! They were Roman Catholics! They promised him a thousand francs every month! And they wished to dine with him! That was the climax! He was frightened at the prospect of having to offer his leg of mutton and his custard to these tremendously rich Americans, who most likely were accustomed to extraordinary, fantastic, unheard-of food. He muttered: "To dine! to dine! You wish to dine with me?"

Jean once more thought it necessary to interfere. "My godfather will be only too glad if you will favour us; but I see what makes him anxious. We were to dine together, we two, and

you must not, ladies, expect a grand spread. You will make allowance, will you not?"

"Yes, certainly," answered Bettina. And addressing her sister: "Well, Suzie, don't pout because of my having been a little—you know it is my way to be a little—— Let us stay, will you, and it will rest us to pass a quiet hour here. We had such a tiring journey by rail; then the carriage in the dust—and the heat! We had such a nasty lunch, too, this morning, in that horrid hotel. We were to return there at seven o'clock to catch the Paris train afterward. But it would be so much nicer to have our dinner here! You don't say no. Ah! what a darling you are, Suzie!"

She kissed her sister very fondly; then, turning to the Curé:

"If you knew, M. le Curé, how kind she is!"

"Bettina, what nonsense!"

"Come, Pauline," said Jean, "be quick; lay two extra places. I will help you."

"And I also!" exclaimed Bettina; "I will help you. Pray, let me do it; it will amuse me so much. Only, M. le Curé, you will allow me to make myself at home."

She threw off her cloak quickly, and Jean was

charmed with the marvellous suppleness and grace of her figure.

Afterward Miss Percival removed her hat, but with too much precipitation, for it was the signal for a charming catastrophe. The loosened mass of hair escaped from its confinement, and fell upon her shoulders in glorious disorder, shining like burnished gold in the sunlight that came through the window, near which she was standing, and forming an exquisite frame for the dazzling beauty of the young girl. Blushing and confused, Bettina was obliged to call her sister to her help, and Mme. Scott had some trouble in bringing order out of that confusion. When the catastrophe was at last repaired, nothing would hinder Bettina from rushing for the plates, knives, and forks.

"Do you know, monsieur," she said to Jean, "I understand how to lay the cloth. Ask my sister. Isn't it true, Suzie, that I used to be very clever at laying the dinner things in New York when I was a child?"

"Yes, very," answered Mme. Scott; and, apologizing for her sister's indiscretion, she too took off her hat and cloak, so that Jean had once more the very pleasant sight of an admirable figure and splendid head of hair. But the charm-

ing mishap was not repeated, and Jean thought that it was a pity.

A few minutes afterward Mme. Scott, Miss Percival, and Jean were sitting round the small dinner-table. Then, very quickly, thanks to the peculiarity and the suddenness of the meeting, and thanks, above all, to Bettina's exuberant spirits, the conversation assumed a tone of the utmost friendliness and cordiality.

"You will see, M. le Curé," said Bettina, "you will see if I don't speak the truth, if I am not dying of hunger. I warn you that I am ravenous. I never sat down to table with more pleasure. This dinner will make such a nice finish to our journey! My sister and I are so delighted to have that château, those farms, that forest!"

"And especially to have all that," continued Mme. Scott, "in a way we so little expected."

"You may say, Suzie, that we did not expect it at all. Fancy, M. le Curé, that yesterday was my sister's birthday. But first, excuse me, monsieur—M. Jean, isn't it?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Well, M. Jean, give me a little more of that nice soup, if you please."

The Abbé Constantin began to regain his

composure; yet he was still too upset to attend on his guests. Jean deemed it proper to play the part of host and to superintend his godfather's modest repast. He then refilled the plate of the lovely American, who resolutely fixed on him two dark eyes sparkling with fun and frankness, which look he returned with one of unmistakable admiration, for though it was barely three-quarters of an hour since they had first met, there was already established between them a most friendly and cordial understanding.

"I was saying to you, M. le Curé," Bettina resumed, "yesterday was my sister's birthday. My brother-in-law, a week ago, went to America. On leaving, he said to my sister, 'I shall not be home on your birthday; you will hear from me, however.' Well, yesterday presents and bouquets came from everywhere; but nothing from my brother-in-law—nothing. We two went out riding—and, speaking of horses——"

She stopped short, and leaning a little forward, looked inquiringly at Jean's dusty high boots, and exclaimed:

"Why, monsieur, you have spurs on!"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"You are in the cavalry, then?"

"I am in the artillery, mademoiselle, and the artillery is cavalry."

"And your regiment is garrisoned?"

"Very near here."

"Then you will ride with us sometimes?"

"With the greatest pleasure, mademoiselle."

"Agreed. Let us see; where was I?"

"You don't know at all where you are, Bettina; and you are telling these gentlemen things that cannot be of interest to them."

"I beg pardon, madame," said the Curé; "the sale of the Château—there is nothing else talked about in the country at this moment—and mademoiselle's recital interests us very much."

"You see, Suzie, my recital interests M. le Curé very much; therefore I shall go on. We went out riding; we came back at seven o'clock—nothing. We dined, and we were rising from table; a cablegram from America was brought to us—two lines only, 'I have bought for you to-day, in your name, the Château of Longueval, near Souvigny, on the north railway line.' Then we both burst out laughing at the thought."

"No, indeed, Bettina," interrupted Mme. Scott; "that is not exactly true. We felt, at first, very touched and grateful, for we are very fond of the country, my sister and I. My husband,

who is extremely kind, knew that we were most anxious to possess an estate in France. He had been looking out in vain for six months. At last, and without telling us, he discovered that Château, which was actually to be sold on my birthday. It was very thoughtful of him."

"Quite so, Suzie; you are right; but after the little fit of gratitude there was a great fit of joy."

"That I acknowledge. When we came to think that we were both—for what belongs to one belongs to the other—suddenly in possession of a château, without knowing where that château stood, what it was like, and how much it had cost, it was just like a fairy-tale. When we stopped laughing we hunted eagerly for a map of France, examined it closely, and not without difficulty succeeded in discovering Souvigny. After the map we consulted the railway time-table, and this morning, by the ten o'clock express, we arrived at Souvigny. We have passed the whole day in visiting the Château, the stables, and the farms. We have not yet seen everything, for it is immense; but we were charmed with all that we saw. Only, M. le Curé, there is one thing about which I feel curious. I know that the estate was sold by

public auction yesterday. All along the road I noticed the big bills; but I never dared to make inquiry of the land-stewards and farmers who accompanied us, lest my ignorance should appear very foolish! How much has it all cost? My husband never thought of telling me in his telegram. Of course, as I am satisfied with the purchase, it is a trifling matter; but still I should like to know. M. le Curé, tell me if you know."

"An enormous price," the Curé answered, for many memories and hopes clustered around Longueval.

"An enormous price! You frighten me. How much exactly?"

"Three millions."

"Is that all!" exclaimed Mme. Scott; "the Château, the farms, the forest; the whole lot for three millions!"

"That is it; three millions."

"Well, that is nothing," said Bettina. "Why, that lovely little stream winding its way through the park is worth three millions."

"And you were saying just before, M. le Curé," inquired Mme. Scott, "you were saying there were several people bidding for the grounds and the Château besides ourselves?"

"That is so, madame."

"Was my name mentioned before those people after the sale?"

"It was, madame."

"And when my name was mentioned, was there any one who knew me, who spoke of me? Yes. Your silence answers me. I feel sure they have spoken about me. Well, M. le Curé, I am getting serious, very serious. I entreat you to repeat what has been said about me."

"Why, madame," answered the unfortunate Curé, who was on thorns, "they have spoken of your wealth."

"Very likely they have. They might have said that I was a 'parvenue.' Is it not so? Very well; but they probably said something else."

"No, indeed; I heard nothing."

"Ah! M. le Curé, you are telling an untruth—what you call a white lie, and it makes you very unhappy; for you must be truth itself. If I torment you so, it is because I want to know what has been said, what——"

"Well, madame," interrupted Jean, "you are right, they said something else, and my godfather is rather shy at repeating it; nevertheless, since you insist upon knowing it, they said

that you were one of the most brilliant, the most——"

"And the prettiest woman in Paris? They may have said that—with a little exaggeration, they may have said that—but that is not all. There is something else."

"Oh! really!"

"Yes, there is something else, and I should like to have from you, this very moment, a plain, straightforward explanation. I don't know, but I feel as if the Fates have been good to me today. It is early yet to say so, but I feel that you two are already my friends, and that some day, when you know me better, you will be still more so. Well, if you hear any more false and stupid stories about me, please contradict them. Am I not right in thinking that you will do so?"

"Yes, certainly, madame," answered Jean, with extreme eagerness; "you are quite right in thinking so."

"Well, it is to you, monsieur, that I apply. You are a soldier, and it is your business to be brave and straightforward. Promise me without explanation or conditions."

"I promise you."

"Then you will answer frankly, yes or no, the questions I shall ask you?"

"I will."

"Have they said that I had been begging in the streets of New York?"

"Yes, they have."

"And that I have been a rider in a travelling circus?"

"Yes, they said so."

"Well done! That is plain enough. First of all, mind you, in all this there is nothing that one might not acknowledge if it were true. But if it is not true, have I not the right to deny it? And it is not true. My history I will tell you in a few words; and if I act like this, the first day of our acquaintance, it is that you may have the kindness to repeat it to the people who speak to you of me. I am going to pass most of my time in this country, and I wish that all should know who I am and where I come from. Therefore, I begin. Poor—yes, I have been poor indeed. That was eight years ago. My father had just died, soon after my mother. I was eighteen and Bettina eleven. We were alone in the world, with heavy debts and a long lawsuit. My father's last words had been, 'Suzie, about the lawsuit mind you never give way, never, never, never—millions, my children; you will have millions.' Delirium set in, and he died

repeating, 'Millions!' The next day an attorney presented himself; he offered to pay the debts and to give me besides ten thousand dollars if I would abandon my interests in the lawsuit, which was about a large estate in Colorado. I refused. It was then that, for a few months, we were very poor."

"And it was then that I laid the cloth," said Bettina.

"I spent my life worrying the solicitors of New York, but no one would look after my interests. Everywhere it was the same answer, 'Your case is very doubtful; you have rich, powerful adversaries; it requires money, lots of money, to go through with the lawsuit, and you have nothing. You are offered ten thousand dollars and your debts will be paid; you should accept and sell your lawsuit.' Yet I remembered my father's last words, and I would not. Unfortunately misery had almost compelled me, when one day I had an interview with one of my father's friends, a banker of New York, Mr. William Scott. He was not alone; a young man was seated in his office, by his writing-table.

"'You may speak,' said the banker to me; 'this is my son, Richard Scott.'

"I glanced at that young man, who looked at me, and we recognised each other.

"'Suzie!' 'Richard!'

"He stretched his hands out to me. He was three-and-twenty, and I eighteen, as I told you. Very often, in days gone by, we had played together. Then we were great friends. Since that time he had been to France and England to complete his education. His father made me take a seat and asked me what brought me there. I told him. He listened to me and answered.

"'About twenty or thirty thousand dollars would be necessary. Nobody would let you have such a large sum on the uncertain chances of a very complicated lawsuit. It would be madness. If you are in need, if you want money——'

"'It is not that, father,' interrupted Richard, eagerly. 'Miss Percival does not mean that——'

"'I know it well, but what she asks is impossible.'

"He rose to escort me to the door. Then I fainted for the first time since my father's death. I had been strong enough up to that moment, but my courage failed. I had a fit of hysterics. Still I recovered myself and took my departure.

An hour afterward, Richard Scott came to my house.

"'Suzie,' said he, 'promise to accept what I am going to offer you; promise me.' I did.

"'Listen, on the single condition that my father shall know nothing about it, I place at your disposal the necessary sum.'

"'But then you ought to know what it is, and what it is worth.'

"'I have not the slightest idea what your lawsuit is about—and I don't wish to know. There would be no credit in obliging you if I had the certainty of recovering my money. Besides, you have promised to accept it. You cannot withdraw it.'

"It was offered with such sincerity that I could not refuse.

"Three months later, the lawsuit was gained—that estate had become our property without possibility of further contest. They wished to buy it from us then for five millions. I went and consulted Richard.

"'Refuse and wait,' said he. 'If you are offered such a sum it shows that the estate is worth double.'

"'But I must pay you back the money you advanced.'

"'Oh! as to that, there is no hurry; I am easy about it; my trust is no longer in danger.'

"'But I should like to pay you at once; I have a horror of debts. There might be a way to pay you back, without selling the estate. Richard, will you marry me?'

"Yes, M. le Curé," said Mme. Scott, laughing, "it was I who proposed to my husband. I threw myself at his head. That you may tell everybody, and it would be nothing but the truth. I was obliged to do it, for, though he loved me, my money would have prevented him proposing to me—I had become too rich. That money frightened him. This is the history of my marriage. As to the history of our fortune, a few words will suffice. In fact there were millions in that estate of Colorado; silver mines were discovered there, and from these mines we annually draw an unlimited income. And my husband, my sister, and I agree in devoting a large portion of our wealth to relieve the poor. You will see, M. le Curé! It is on account of our having experienced such hard times, it is because Bettina does not forget that she used to lay the table-cloth at our little lodging in the fifth story in New York, that we shall always give a certain sum to the poor. Who talked

about it? Not we, surely; however, the matter was put into the papers, together with the amount. Thereupon two young reporters hurried to interview M. Scott about his past history. They wanted to write in the papers some —what do you call it?—some 'chroniques.' M. Scott is sometimes very stern. He was so that day, and dismissed these gentlemen rather abruptly without telling them anything. Then, not knowing our history, they invented one, and a very fanciful one, too. One told that I had been begging in the snow in New York, and the next day the other published an article still more sensational; he represented me springing through paper hoops in a circus in Philadelphia. You have very funny newspapers in France, indeed, and so have we in America."

During the last five minutes, Pauline had been making desperate signs to the Curé, who was determined not to understand, so that the poor woman, at last summoning all her courage, said:

"M. le Curé, it is a quarter-past seven!"

"A quarter-past seven!"

"Oh! ladies, I beg you to excuse me. This evening I have my office of the month of Mary."

"Will the service take place directly?"

"Yes, directly."

"And when does our train start for Paris?"

"At half-past nine," replied Jean, "and it will only take twenty minutes to drive to the station."

"Then, Suzie, we might go to church."

"Yes, let us go," replied Mme. Scott; "but before parting, M. le Curé, I have a favour to ask of you. I should very much like the first time we dine at Longueval, to have you to dine with us—and you too, M. Jean. Just we four like to-day. Oh! don't refuse; the invitation is given so heartily."

"And accepted as heartily, madame," replied Jean.

"I will write to let you know the day. I shall come as soon as possible. You call it 'pendre la crémaillère,' don't you? Well, we 'pendrons la crémaillère,' we four."

Meanwhile Pauline had beckoned Bettina aside, and spoken to her very excitedly. This talk had ended with these words:

"You will be there?" said Bettina.

"Yes, I will be there."

"And you will not fail to tell me at what moment?"

"I will be sure to tell you but mind—M.

le Curé is coming, he must not suspect anything."

The two sisters, the Curé, and Jean went out together. In going from the village to the church it was necessary to pass through the cemetery. It was a glorious night. They walked silently down the avenue, in the pale light of sunset. On their way was Dr. Reynaud's tomb —very simple, but which, however, by its proportions, stood out among the others. Mme. Scott and Bettina stopped, struck by the inscription engraved on the stone:

"Here lies Dr. Marcel Reynaud, surgeon-major of the Souvigny *mobilisés*, killed, Jan. 8, 1871, at the battle of Villersexel. Pray for him."

When they had finished reading, the Curé, pointing to Jean, said simply:

"It was his father."

The two women then drew nearer the tomb, and stood with bent heads for a few minutes, thoughtful, moved, meditative; then, both at the same time, with the same impulse, turned and held out their hands to the young officer, and resumed their walk churchwards.

Jean's father had had their first prayer at Longueval.

The Curé went to put on his surplice and

stole. Jean escorted Mme. Scott to the pew which had been for two centuries used by the squires of Longueval. Pauline had gone on before, and was waiting for Miss Percival in the shade, behind a pillar of the church; she conducted Bettina up a narrow and straight staircase which led to the gallery, and installed her before the harmonium.

Preceded by two chorister boys, the old Curé came out of the vestry, and at the moment when he knelt down on the altar steps, Pauline, whose heart was beating with impatience, whispered to Bettina:

"Now is the time. Poor, dear man, how glad he will be!"

When he heard the sound of the organ rising gently as a murmur and pealing through the little church, such strong emotion and joy came over the Abbé Constantin, that the tears sprang to his eyes. He did not remember that he had wept since the day when Jean had told him he would share his money with the mother and sister of the soldiers who had fallen under the German bullets.

To bring tears into the old priest's eyes it was necessary that a little American should have crossed the seas and played a "*Rêverie de Chopin*" in the church of Longueval.

CHAPTER IV

THE following morning, at half-past five, the signal for saddling was sounded in the barrack-yard. Jean mounted and took the command of his company. At the end of May all the recruits are drilled so that they may be able to take part in the grand manœuvres. At the Polygone, manœuvres of horse batteries are executed almost every day.

Jean liked his profession. He inspected with much care the harness of the horses, the accoutrements and bearing of his men; but that morning he gave only a slight attention to all the little details of the service.

He was agitated, worried, tormented by a problem of which the solution could not be given at the École Polytechnique. Jean could not give a precise answer to this question.

Which of the two is the prettier?

At the Polygone, during the first part of the manœuvres, each battery works independently, under the captain's commands; but he often

gives his place to one of his lieutenants, in order to accustom him to the management of the field-pieces. This day, from the very beginning of the practice, the command was entrusted to Jean.

To the great surprise of his captain, who thought his first lieutenant a very capable and skilful officer, everything went amiss.

Jean gave two or three wrong directions. He neither knew how to calculate nor to maintain the distances.

On several occasions the pieces came into contact; the captain was obliged to interfere; he addressed to Jean a slight rebuke, which ended with these words:

"I cannot understand it at all. What is the matter with you this morning? It is the first time such a thing has happened."

It was also the first time that Jean had seen anything other than cannons, caissons, horses, and gunners on the parade ground. In the clouds of dust raised by the wheels of the caissons and the hoofs of the horses, Jean perceived not the second mounted battery of the Ninth Regiment of Artillery, but the bewitching images of two Americans with dark eyes and golden hair. And at the moment when he respectfully accepted his

captain's well-merited rebuke, Jean was saying to himself, "Mme. Scott is the prettier."

Every morning the manœuvre is divided into two parts by an interval of ten minutes' rest. The officers gather together and chatter. Jean kept aloof that morning, alone with his remembrances of the previous night. His thoughts obstinately took him back to Longueval Vicarage. "Yes, Mme. Scott is the more charming of the two. Miss Percival is but a child." He could see Mme. Scott seated at the Curé's little table. He could hear her history told with such frankness and sincerity, and such a sweet voice, soft yet penetrating.

He found himself in the church again. There she was, before him, kneeling at the *prie-Dieu*, her pretty head buried in her little hands. Then the harmonium began to make itself heard, and in the distance Jean vaguely perceived Bettina's slender and elegant silhouette. A child? Was she only a child? The trumpet sounded. The manœuvres were resumed. This time, fortunately, no more command or responsibility for Jean. The four batteries executed the grand manœuvres. One could see that enormous mass of men, horses, and ordnance turning round on all sides, sometimes spread out in a long line of battle, some-

times massed in a compact group. All stopped at the same instant over the whole extent of the ground. The gunners sprang from their horses, ran to their pieces, uncoupled each from its team —which went off at a trot—and prepared to fire with a wonderful rapidity. Then the horses returned, the gunners recoupled their pieces, sprang quickly to saddle, and the regiment set off at full gallop across the field.

Very gently Bettina regained her advantage in Jean's mind. She appeared to him smiling and blushing, with her golden hair flowing like a mantle round her. "M. Jean."—She had called him M. Jean, and never had his Christian name sounded so sweet to him. And the last handshake, on taking leave, before entering the carriage! Miss Percival had pressed his hand a little more warmly than Mme. Scott had done—positively a little more. She had taken off her gloves to play the harmonium, and Jean still felt the touch of that little bare hand, which hid itself, soft and supple, in his big, rough, clumsy artilleryman's "paw."

I was mistaken just now, thought he; Miss Percival is the prettier. The day's work was finished. The pieces were placed in line one behind the other, in close order. and they started

rapidly away with a frightful noise and in a cloud of dust. When Jean, sword in hand, passed before his colonel, the images of the two sisters were so completely confused and blended in his recollection that they seemed to become in some measure the image of one and the same person. Any parallel became impossible because of that confusion of the two women.

Mme. Scott and Miss Percival remained inseparable in Jean's thoughts, until the day he saw them again.

The impression of that sudden meeting did not pass away; it remained sweet and vivid, to such a degree that Jean felt agitated and uneasy in his mind.

Could it be possible that he had been so foolish, he thought to himself, as to fall in love at first sight? But no! one falls in love with a woman—not with two women at the same time. That quieted him. He was very ignorant of the world, that young fellow of four-and-twenty. Love never had entered fully, really into his heart. He knew love only through novels and plays, and had read and seen but very few of them. Yet he was not a saint. He found the *grisettes* of Souvigny very nice. When they allowed him to tell them they were charming,

he would tell them so willingly ; but as to seeing love in those fantasies which raised in his heart only light and superficial feelings, he never had thought of it.

On the contrary, Paul de Lavardens had a very susceptible nature. His heart always had room for two or three loves, and in that small town of five hundred souls he always could find plenty of pretty girls to amuse himself with. He was continually imagining that he had discovered America, when in reality he only had refound it.

As to the world, Jean had scarcely had a glimpse of it. Some ten times he had allowed Paul to take him to a *soirée*, or dance, in the châteaux in the neighbourhood. He had brought back an impression of constraint and wearisomeness, and had come to the conclusion that those worldly pleasures were not for him. His tastes were simple and serious. He was fond of solitary walks, the open country, horses, and books. Somewhat of a rustic, he loved his native village, and all the old friends of his childhood, who spoke to him of bygone days.

A quadrille in a drawing-room caused him uneasiness impossible to overcome ; but every year, at the village *fête*, he danced merrily with

the maidens and the farmers' wives of the neighbourhood. Had he seen Mme. Scott and Miss Percival in their home amid all its splendour and luxury, he would have looked at them with curiosity, as he would have done at some precious objects of art; then he would have returned home, and would, most likely, have slept as peacefully as ever.

But it was not so that things had occurred this time; hence his astonishment, his trouble. Those two ladies, by the greatest chance, had presented themselves under circumstances that were familiar to him, and which, for that very fact, had been particularly favourable to them. From the first they had been homely, kind, frank, and, over and above all, exquisitely pretty. Jean had fallen immediately under the spell. He was still there.

At the moment when he dismounted in the barrack-yard, Abbé Constantin set out on his daily round of visiting. The old priest had not recovered from the previous day's excitement, and a sleepless night had caused him to rise at an earlier hour than usual. With closed doors, alone with Pauline, he had counted and recounted his money, spreading his hundred *louis* on the table, and, like a miser, taking pleasure in

handling it. All that for him—that is to say, for his poor.

"Don't go too fast, M. le Curé," said Pauline. "Be economical. I think if we give away one hundred francs to-day——"

"It is not enough, Pauline; it is not enough, indeed. I shall have only one such day in my life, but I shall have had it. Do you know how much I am going to give away, Pauline?"

"How much, M. le Curé?"

"A thousand francs."

"A thousand francs!"

"Yes, we are millionaires now. All the treasures of America our ours, and you would have me be economical? Not to-day, at any rate. It would not be right to be so."

Mass over, at nine o'clock he set out, and it was a golden rain all along his route. Each one had his share—the poor who owned their poverty as well as those who concealed it. Each gift was accompanied with the same little speech.

"This comes from the new owners of Longueval—two American ladies—Mme. Scott and Miss Percival. Mind you remember their names and pray for them to-night." Then he ran away without waiting for thanks; across the fields, through the woods, from hamlet to hamlet, from

cottage to cottage, he went on and on and on. A kind of intoxication had seized him. All along the way, everywhere he went, cries of joy and astonishment followed him. It seemed like a miracle that all those *louis d'or* had fallen into his poor hands, accustomed to receive only very small silver coins. The Curé even indulged in extravagances, real extravagances; he was fairly startled: he hardly knew himself. He gave even to those who did not ask.

He met with Claude Rigal, a retired sergeant who had lost his arm at Sebastopol in the Crimean War, an old man already turning white, for time is flying and the Crimean soldiers will soon be all gone.

"Here," said the Curé, "here are twenty francs for you."

"Twenty francs! But I don't ask for anything; I have my pension."

"His pension! Seven hundred francs!"

"Well," answered the Curé, "that will buy you some cigars; but listen, it comes from America."

He began again his little speech about the new owners of Longueval.

He then visited an old woman, whose son had gone to Tunis the preceding month.

"How is your son getting on?"

"I heard from him yesterday. He is going on very well, thank you. He does not complain; only he says that there are no such people as Kroumirs. Poor fellow! I saved a little money last month, and I think I shall be able to send him ten francs shortly."

"You will send him thirty. Take it."

"Twenty francs! M. le Curé, you give me twenty francs!"

"Yes, I do."

"For my boy?"

"For your boy. Only, listen, it is necessary for you to know where it comes from; you must not fail to tell your son when you write to him."

The Curé, for the twentieth time, repeated his little speech about Mme. Scott and Miss Percival. At six o'clock he returned home, tired out, but exceedingly happy and satisfied.

"I have given it all away!" he exclaimed as soon as he caught sight of Pauline. "All! all!"

He dined, and the same evening held the service of the month of Mary; but, alas! when he went up to the altar the harmonium was silent. Miss Percival was no longer there. At that same moment, the little organist of the preceding evening was feeling perplexed. On the

sofa in her dressing-room two dresses were displayed—a white and a blue one. Bettina was debating as to which of those two dresses she should put on to go to the opera. She thought them both delicious, but she had to choose. She could wear only one. After long hesitation, she decided on the white one.

At half-past nine the two sisters mounted the grand staircase in the opera house. When they entered their box, the curtain was rising on the second tableau of the second act of *Aïda*, the act of the ballet and the march.

Two young men, Roger de Puymartin and Louis de Martillet, were seated in the first row in a "baignoire." The ballet girls were not yet on the stage, and the gentlemen, having nothing to do, amused themselves by looking round the house.

The appearance of Miss Percival made a great impression on both.

"Ah! ah!" said Puymartin, "here is the little gold ingot."

Both levelled their opera-glasses at Bettina.

"She is dazzling to-night," resumed Martillet. "Just look—the contour of her neck, the turn of her wrists. Still a girl and already a woman."

"Yes, she is ravishing."

"Fifteen millions, they say. Fifteen millions of her own, and the silver mine is still in full swing."

"Berulle told me twenty-five millions—and he is very well up in American affairs."

"Twenty-five millions! A nice match for Romanelli."

"How Romanelli?"

"It is rumoured that they are engaged—that the marriage is quite settled."

"Marriage settled, may be, but with Montessan, not with Romanelli! Ah, here come the ballet at last."

They stopped talking. In *Aïda* the ballet lasts only five minutes, and they had both come expressly for these five minutes. Therefore they meant to enjoy it respectfully, religiously, for it is to be noticed with the habitués of the opera that they chatter like magpies when they ought to be silent, and that they observe an absolute silence when they might be allowed to speak. The heroic trumpets of *Aïda* sounded their last fanfare in honour of Radamès. Before the colossal sphinx under the green foliage of the palm trees, the glittering danseuses advanced and took possession of the stage. Mme.

Scott followed with interest and pleasure the figures of the ballet; but Bettina had suddenly become thoughtful on perceiving, in a box on the other side of the house, a tall, dark young man, who was looking fixedly at her. She said to herself:

"What shall I do? What shall I decide? Shall I marry that tall fellow who is there opposite, and is watching me?—for it is me at whom he is looking. He will come directly this act is over, and, when he comes, I have only to say, 'It is decided, there is my hand; I will be your wife,' and then all would be settled. Princess—I should be princess. Princess Bettina Romanelli. That sounds nice. 'Mme. la Princesse est servie—will Mme. la Princesse ride to-morrow morning?' Should I be happy to be a princess?—yes and no. Among all the young men who, during the past year, have run after my money, this Prince Romanelli is still the best. I shall have to make up my mind to marry—some day. I think he loves me. Yes; but I—do I love him? No, I think not—and yet I feel that I could love so much!"

At that very hour when these reflections were passing through Bettina's pretty head, Jean, alone, in his study, seated before his writing-table, with

a big book illuminated by the pale light of the lamp, was going again and again through the history of Turenne's campaigns. He had been deputed to deliver a lecture to the non-commissioned officers of the regiment, and he was taking some notes and looking over his lessons for the morrow. But in the midst of his notes—Mordligen, 1642; Les Dunes, 1656; Mulhausen and Turkleim, 1674–5—what does he see? A little sketch. Jean was by no means a bad draughtsman—a woman's face had grown under his pen. How did she come there in the midst of Turenne's victories, that pretty little "bonne femme"? And who was she? Mme. Scott or Miss Percival? How could he know? They were so much alike! Then Jean, wearily and laboriously, came back to the history of Turenne's campaigns.

At the same moment the Abbé Constantin knelt down at the foot of his little walnut couch, calling down, with all the strength of his heart, the blessing of Heaven upon the two women who had enabled him to pass such a sweet and happy day. He asked God that Mme. Scott might be happy in her children, and that Miss Percival might get a husband after her own heart.

CHAPTER V

PARIS formerly belonged to the Parisians, and that time is not so very far off—thirty or forty years at the most. The French were masters of Paris then, as the English are of London now, the Spaniards of Madrid, the Russians of St. Petersburg.

Those times are no more. There are still frontiers for other countries; there are none for France. Paris has become an immense Tower of Babel, an international and universal tower. Foreigners do not come simply to visit Paris; they come to live there. We have in Paris now a Russian colony, a Spanish colony, and an American colony. These colonies have their own churches, their own bankers, their own doctors, their own newspapers, their own pastors, their own popes, and their own dentists. Foreigners have already wrested from us the largest part of the Champs Elysées and of the Boulevard Malsherbes. They advance, they spread; we retire, driven back by the invasion. We are

obliged to exile ourselves, so we go and found Parisian colonies in the plains of Passy and of Monceau, in the quarters that formerly were not Paris, and which are scarcely so to-day.

Among those foreign colonies, the largest, the richest, and the most brilliant is the American. There is a moment when the American feels rich enough; a Frenchman never does. Then the American stops, takes breath, and, while saving his capital, makes no account of his income. He knows how to spend; the Frenchman knows only how to save.

The Frenchman has really but one luxury—his revolutions. Prudently and wisely he reserves himself for them, knowing well that they will cost France dear, but at the same time will give opportunities for first-rate investments. The budget of our country is nothing but a public loan, always open. The Frenchman says to himself, "Let us hoard up! Let us hoard up! Let us hoard up! One of these days there will be a revolution which will send down the 'five per cents.' to fifty or sixty francs. Then I shall buy some. Since revolutions are inevitable, let us at any rate try to turn them to profit!"

We hear continually of people who have been ruined by revolutions, yet greater, perhaps, is

the number of those who have been enriched by them.

Americans feel very strongly the attractions of Paris. There is no city in the world where it is easier to spend a lot of money.

As a natural consequence of their birth and breeding, that attraction asserted itself strongly upon Mme. Scott and her sister.

The most French of our colonies is Canada, which is no longer ours. The memory of their native country has remained very powerful and very sweet in the hearts of the emigrants of Quebec and Montreal. Suzie Percival had been reared by her mother in French style, and she had brought up her sister in the same love of our country. The two sisters felt themselves quite French; more than that—Parisian. As soon as that avalanche of millions had fallen upon them, the same desire possessed them—to go to live in Paris. They longed for France as one longs for one's own country.

M. Scott made some objection. "When I am no longer in America," said he, "or if I only pass two or three months a year there, your interests will not be looked after carefully enough, and your income will diminish."

"What does it matter?" answered Suzie.

"We are rich enough—too rich. Pray let us go. We shall be so glad, so delighted!"

M. Scott allowed himself to be persuaded, and Suzie on the 1st day of January, 1880, wrote the following letter to her friend, Katie Norton, who had been living in Paris the last few years:

"The day is won. It is settled. Richard has consented. We shall arrive in April, and become French once more. You kindly offered to take upon yourself all the arrangements of our household in Paris. I am going to be terribly exigent—I accept.

"As soon as I set my foot in Paris, I should like to enjoy it without having to spend the first month at the upholsterer's, horse-dealer's, and so on. When I get out of the train, I should like to find my horses, carriage, and coachman at the station. I should like to have you to dine with me that very evening. Hire or purchase a mansion, engage servants, choose the carriages, horses, and liveries. I leave it entirely to you. I wish the liveries to be blue, that is all. This line added at the request of Bettina, who is looking over my shoulder at what I am writing. We shall only bring with us seven persons—Richard, his valet, Bettina and myself, our maids, the chil-

dren's governesses, and the two boys, Toby and Bobby, who follow us when riding. They ride beautifully — *deux vrais petits amours* of the same height, same gait, and almost the same features. We never could find two better-matched grooms in Paris.

"We leave all the rest in New York—things and people. No, not all the rest. I was forgetting the four little ponies, four little darlings as black as ink, with four white socks. We never should have the heart to leave them behind. We harness them to a *duc*; it is lovely. Bettina and I can drive four-in-hand very well. Women may drive four-in-hands in the Bois early in the morning without being talked about, may they not? Here they may.

"Mind, my dear, don't trouble about expense. Be as extravagant as you like. I give you *carte blanche.*"

The same day that Mme. Norton received that letter the news came out of the *debâcle* of a Garneville, a great speculator whose foresight had been at fault; he had foreseen a fall when he should have foreseen a rise.

That Garneville, six weeks before, had settled down in a perfectly new mansion, the only draw-

back to which was its costly magnificence. Mme. Norton signed an agreement; a hundred thousand francs a year, with the option of buying the mansion and furniture for two millions of francs during the first year of the lease. A fashionable upholsterer undertook to tone down the excessive gaudiness of the furniture, which was loud and in bad taste.

That done, Mme. Scott's friend was fortunate enough to meet with two of those real artists, without whom grand houses could not be managed properly.

To begin with, a first-rate *chef*, who had just left an old mansion in the Faubourg Saint Germain, to his great regret, for he had aristocratic feelings, and it came rather hard on him to serve with foreigners.

Said he to Mme. Norton, "I never should have left Mme. la Baronne if she had kept up her establishment on the same scale. But Mme. la Baronne has four children—two sons who have been very wild, and two daughters who will soon be old enough to be married. They must have a dowry; in short, Mme. la Baronne is obliged to put a curb on her expenses, and the house is no longer important enough for me."

This distinguished patrician stated his terms, which, although excessive, did not frighten Mme. Norton, who felt she was dealing with a genius in the culinary art. But he, before settling anything, asked permission to wire to New York; he wished to make inquiries. The answer was favourable, so he accepted.

The second artist was a *piqueur* of rare and high abilities, who had just retired after making a fortune. He, however, consented to organize Mme. Scott's stables. It was agreed that the purchasing of the horses should be entirely intrusted to him; he should not wear livery, and he should choose the coachmen, grooms, and stablemen. There should be not less than fifteen horses in the stables, no business should be contracted with the coachman or the harness-maker without first consulting him, and he should only take his place on the box in the morning, and in ordinary dress, to give driving lessons to the ladies, and, if necessary, to the children.

The *chef* took possession of the culinary department, and the *piqueur* of the stables; all the rest was only a question of money, and Mme. Norton largely used her full powers. She followed the instructions she had received, and, in the short space of two months, she did wonders

for the Scotts' household arrangements, which she determined should be absolutely faultless.

And so it was that, on the 15th April, 1880, when Mme. Scott and Bettina alighted from the Havre express, at 4.30 P. M., on the platform of the St. Lazare terminus, they were met by Mme. Norton, who said :

" Your *calèche* is waiting for you in the station inclosure. Behind the *calèche* there is a landau for the children, and behind the landau there is an omnibus for the servants.

" The three carriages have your armorial bearings, are driven by your own coachmen, and drawn by your own horses. You live at 24 Rue Murillo, and here is the menu of your dinner for to-night. Two months ago you invited me. I accept, and even take the liberty of bringing with me about fifteen people. I have provided everything, even the guests. Don't be alarmed ; you know them all ; they are our common friends —and, this evening, we shall be able to judge the abilities of your cook."

Mme. Norton handed to Mme. Scott a pretty little card with a gilt rim, on which these words were written, " Menu du diner du 15 Avril 1880," and below, " Consomme à la Parisienne, truites saumonées à la Russe," etc.

The first Parisian that had the honour and pleasure of rendering homage to the beauty of Mme. Scott and Miss Percival was a little kitchen boy of about fifteen, who, dressed in white, was standing on the pavement, a large wicker basket on his head, at the moment when Mme. Scott's coachman, stopped by a block in the traffic, was with much difficulty driving out of the station.

The boy gazed with wide-opened eyes at the two beautiful sisters, and, with a look of comical dismay, exclaimed, "*Mazette !!!!*"

When Mme. Récamier, the celebrated French beauty of the beginning of the century, first became conscious of wrinkles and white hairs, she said to a friend of hers:

"Ah, my dear, now there is no possible illusion. The day that I saw that the little chimney-sweeps no longer turned round to look at me, I understood that all was over."

In such circumstances, the opinions of little kitchen boys must be worth as much as those of little chimney-sweeps. All was not over for Suzie and Bettina then; but, on the contrary, was only just beginning.

Five minutes afterward, Mme. Scott's *calèche*, drawn by two splendid horses, rolled along the

Boulevard Haussmann — Paris possessed two more Parisians.

Mme. Scott and Bettina's appearance in Paris was quite an ovation. The professional beauties of Paris are not ranked or catalogued like the London beauties. They do not have their portraits published in the illustrated papers, nor do they allow their photographs to be sold at the stationers'.

However, there always exists a little staff of about twenty women who represent grace, beauty, and Parisian elegance, which women, after ten or twelve years of service, are on the muster-roll of the reserve, just like old generals. Suzie and Bettina immediately belonged to that little staff. It was a matter of twenty-four hours, for all happened between eight o'clock A. M. and midnight of the day after their arrival in Paris. Imagine a sort of little three-act comedy, of which the success goes on increasing from tableau to tableau.

First. Riding in the Bois in the morning at ten o'clock, with the two marvellous little grooms imported from America.

Second. A walk in the Avenue des Acacias at six o'clock.

Third. A short appearance in Mme. Nor-

ton's box at the opera at ten o'clock in the evening.

The two newly arrived beauties became immediately the cynosure of all eyes, and that mysterious tribunal of thirty or forty fashionables, from whose judgment there is no appeal, pronounced them "splendid," "*ravissantes*," etc. That was enough for Paris society, and the two sisters were beauties beyond question.

In the morning their charms and distinction were admired; in the afternoon they were declared to have the stately and self-reliant gait of two young goddesses, and in the evening there was only one voice on the ideal perfection of their shoulders. The game was won. All Paris echoed the little street-boy's verdict—"*Mazette!*" —in different tones, of course.

Mme. Scott's receptions became at once the rage, and were most "select." The habitués of three or four grand American houses went *en masse* to the Scotts', who had three hundred people to their first Wednesday "at home." Their circle of acquaintances increased very rapidly. There was a little bit of everything among their visitors—Americans, Spaniards, Italians, Hungarians, Russians, and even Parisians.

When Mme. Scott had told her history to Abbé Constantin, she had not told all. One never tells everything.

She knew she was charming, liked people to notice it, and did not object to being told so. In short, she was coquettish. Could she have been Parisian without being so?

M. Scott had full confidence in his wife, and left her entire liberty. He did not go into society much. He was a gentleman, and felt rather uncomfortable at having married so rich a woman. Having a taste for business, he chose to devote himself entirely to the management of the two enormous fortunes that were in his hands. He added to them carefully, and would say to his wife and sister-in-law, Bettina: "You are richer now than last year."

It was not enough for him to watch with caution and skilfulness over the interests he had left behind in America; he embarked upon important speculations in Paris, and was as successful there as he had been in New York. Money makes money.

Mme. Scott was tremendously sought after; she was courted in French, English, Italian, and Spanish, as she was at home in all these languages, and this is one of the advantages that

foreigners have over poor Parisians, who, as a rule, speak only their mother tongue, and have therefore no chance of international flirtations. Mme. Scott did not give the cold shoulder to any of her admirers, and at the same time had ten, twenty, thirty dear friends. No one could boast of a preference. To each she offered the same amiable, cheerful, laughing resistance. It was obvious that she took pleasure in the game, but did not for a minute take it in earnest. She played for amusement's sake, and the love of making fresh conquests.

M. Scott had not the slightest anxiety; he was perfectly easy in his mind. More than that, he enjoyed his wife's success; he was pleased to see her happy. He loved her very "much," a little more than she did him. She loved him "well"—nothing more. There is a great difference between "well" and "much," when these two adverbs are placed after the verb "To love."

As for Bettina, it was a real race for her, a regular *ronde infernale*. Such a beauty! Such a fortune!!

Miss Percival arrived on the 15th April. Fifteen days had not yet elapsed before offers of marriage began to shower upon her. In one year—Bettina for fun kept a little account—she

had thirty-four opportunities of marriage; and from what a variety of suitors!

She had an offer from a young exile, who, under certain contingencies might be called to a throne—a very small one, it is true, but a throne, anyhow.

She had an offer from a young duke, who would hold an exalted place at court when France—and that was inevitable—should acknowledge its errors and bow to its legitimate masters.

She had an offer from a young deputy of the Liberal party, who had made a very successful début in the House, and for whom high destinies were in store, when the Republic was established in France on an indestructible basis.

She had an offer from a young Spaniard of the bluest blood, and it was hinted that the evening party in honour of the marriage contract should take place in a queen's palace that is situated very near the Arc de l'Étoile.

Besides, this address can be found in the Bottin—between the name of a lawyer and that of a chemist. It is only kings of France who do not live in France.

She had an offer from the son of an English

peer, and from the son of a member of the Lower House, also one from the son of a Russian ambassador, an offer from a Hungarian count, and from an Italian prince, and also from several little chaps who were nobody, and had nothing—neither name nor money. But Bettina had granted them a waltz, and believing themselves irresistible, they hoped to have made her little heart beat.

Up to the present, nothing had made this little heart beat quicker, and all suitors had been dismissed with the same answer. No! No! Still No! Always No!

A few days after that performance of *Aïda*, the two sisters had a long talk together about that important, eternal matrimonial question. Mme. Scott mentioned several names that had drawn forth most emphatic and energetic objections from Miss Percival, and Suzie laughingly had said to her sister:

"However, my dear, you will have to marry some day."

"Yes, certainly; but I never shall marry where I don't love, unless the prospect of becoming an old maid frightens me into it. But that time is far off at present. Let us wait, then; let us wait."

"Let us wait. But among all those suitors who have been following you during all this year, some were very nice, very pleasant, and it is, indeed, rather curious that none of them——"

"No, Suzie, dear, none, indeed. Why should I not tell you the truth? Is it my fault, or do they not go the right way to win my heart? Is it that this way is a rough, stony, and inaccessible one, along which no one ever will pass? Or am I a little dry, heartless creature, condemned never to love? I don't think so."

"Nor do I."

"But up to now, however, here is my story. I never felt anything like love. You think it is fun. You are laughing—and what you are laughing at I know. You are thinking to yourself, 'Just fancy this little girl, who pretends to know what love is.' You are right there. I don't know much about it, but I think I know a little. To love, dear—is it not to prefer a certain person to anybody and anything else?"

"Quite so."

"Is it not never to tire of seeing and hearing that person? Is it not to cease living when he is no longer there? To begin again to live as soon as he returns?"

"Oh! Oh, this is great love."

"Well, this is the love I dream of."

"And this is the love that does not come?"

"Yes; up to the present. And yet there is a person whom I prefer to all others. Do you know whom I mean?"

"I don't—but I think I can guess."

"Indeed, it is yourself, my darling, and it may be you who causes me to be so indifferent to all others. I love you too dearly. You fill the whole of my heart; there is no more room in it. Full inside. To prefer any one else—to love any one more than I do you—I could not manage it."

"Oh, yes, you will."

"Oh, no, I shall not. To love in another way, perhaps—but more—never. He must not reckon upon it, that gentleman whom I am expecting, and who does not come."

"Don't fear, Betty, dear, there will be room in your heart for all those you will love—for your husband, your children—and this without my losing anything. The heart is very little, but can hold a great deal."

Bettina fondly embraced her sister, then remained leaning her head on Suzie's shoulder.

"However, if you grow tired of keeping me

near you, if you are anxious to get rid of me, do you know what I would do? I would put the names of those gentlemen into a basket and draw lots for them. There are two who might do at a pinch."

"Which?"

"Just guess."

"Prince Romanelli?"

"That makes one—and the other?"

"M. de Montessan?"

"That makes two—you guessed right. Yes, these two would be acceptable only—and that is not enough."

This is why Bettina wished to be settled down at Longueval. She felt rather tired of so much pleasure, so much success, and, above all, so many offers of marriage. The Parisian whirlwind had taken possession of her, and was not willing to let her go. Not a minute's rest. She felt now that she wanted to be left alone, quite to herself, for a few days, at any rate, in order to take counsel with herself in the quiet retirement of country life.

Therefore Bettina was quite lively and excited at noon on the 14th of June, when she entered the carriage that was to convey her to Longueval. As soon as she found herself quite

alone in the first-class reserved compartment with her sister—

"Ah," she exclaimed, "how delighted I am! Let us breathe a little, *tête-à-tête* with you for ten days, for the Nortons and the Turners will not come before the 25th, will they?"

"No, only on the 25th."

"We shall pass all our time riding and driving in the woods and fields. Ten days of liberty, and during those ten days, no more lovers, no more lovers. By the way, all those lovers, what were they in love with? Me, or my money? That is the mystery, the impenetrable mystery."

The engine whistled, the train began to move slowly, a rather foolish idea flashed into Bettina's brain; she bent forward through the carriage window, and loudly and gesticulatingly cried, "Adieu, my lovers, adieu!"

Then throwing herself back into the corner, and bursting out laughing, she added, "Oh, Suzie, Suzie!"

"What is the matter?"

"A signalman with a red flag in his hand. He has seen me. He has seen me. And he looked at me, so surprised."

"You are so silly."

"Silly to have shouted out of the window,

perhaps, but not to feel happy at the thought that we are going to live alone, we two, like a couple of bachelors."

"Alone, alone. Not so much so. To begin with, we have two guests to dine with us to-night."

"So we have, but I shall not be sorry at all to see them. Indeed, I shall be very glad to see the old Curé, and especially the young officer."

"How so—especially?"

"Certainly, because it was so touching what that Souvigny banker told us about him the other day. It was so good, what he did, this '*grand artilleur*,' when he was a little boy, so good, so good, so good, that I shall look out for the opportunity of telling him what I think of it to-night, and I shall find it." Then, shifting the conversation, she resumed:

"The telegram was sent to Edward yesterday about the ponies?"

"Yes, yesterday, before dinner."

"Oh, you will let me drive them up to the Château. I should so like to drive through the town and make a fine sweeping entry, without slacking pace, into the yard, before the steps. Say you will."

"Yes, agreed; you shall drive the ponies."

"How kind you are, my darling!"

Edward was head-coachman; he had arrived at the Château three days before in order to superintend the arrangement of the stables. He condescended to come to meet Mme. Scott and Miss Percival with the four ponies harnessed to the *duc*. He was waiting in the station-yard with a great number of followers. Indeed, all Souvigny was there. The four ponies, driven through the principal street, had created quite a sensation. People rushed out of their houses and made anxious inquiries to one another. "What is that?" they said. "What is that?" A few people ventured to suggest, "A travelling circus, do doubt!" But that idea was at once negatived. "You have not seen it? What splendid style it is, and the smart carriage with its glittering harness, and the small ponies with white roses on each side of their heads!"

The crowd gathered in the station-yard, and the bystanders heard that they were to have the pleasure of witnessing the arrival of the "châtelaines" of Souvigny.

They were rather disappointed when the two sisters made their appearance, very pretty, but very simple in their travelling dresses. Those

good people had been expecting the apparition of two fairy princesses, clad in silk and brocades, sparkling with rubies and diamonds. But they opened wide their eyes when they saw Bettina walk slowly round the four ponies, patting them one after the other, with a light touch of her hand, and examining with a knowing air the details of the team.

Bettina was not at all displeased with the impression she evidently had made upon the throng of country people, and, her inspection over, she took off her long Suède gloves without too much haste, and replaced them with a pair of thick driving gloves, which she took out of the pocket of the carriage apron. Then, somehow, she slipped on to the box into Edward's place and dexterously received from him the reins and whip, without letting the horses notice the change of hand. Mme. Scott sat by her sister's side. The ponies pawed, chafed, and threatened to rear.

"Mademoiselle must be careful," said Edward. "The ponies are very fresh and restive to-day."

"Don't be afraid," answered Bettina. "I know them."

Miss Percival had a very gentle and firm

hand. She succeeded in controlling the fiery little steeds for a few moments, forcing them to stand quiet; then gently touching the two leaders with her whip, she started off, and in a masterly style drove out of the station-yard, followed by a long murmur of astonishment and admiration.

The ponies' steps sounded on the sharp little stones. Bettina held them in until they reached the end of the town; then, when she saw two miles of good, straight road in front, she gave them their heads and away they went like the wind.

"How delightful it is, Suzie!" she exclaimed. "We are going to enjoy ourselves on these roads. Will you take the ribbons now? They are such good steppers, and know what they are about. Here, take them."

"No, you keep them. I enjoy more to see you enjoying it."

"Oh, as to enjoying it, I do enjoy it. I am so fond of this—driving four-in-hand—with such a good road. At Paris I dared not lately—even in the morning—too much staring. I felt uncomfortable. But here—nobody, nobody, nobody."

At the moment when Bettina, already a little

excited with fresh air and freedom, was exclaiming triumphantly, "Nobody, nobody, nobody," a rider showed himself and drew nearer and approached the carriage.

It was Paul de Lavardens. He had been watching for more than an hour to see the Americans pass.

"You make a mistake," said Suzie to Bettina. "Here is somebody coming."

"A countryman. That does not matter. He will not propose to me."

"It is not a countryman at all. Look!"

On passing the carriage, Paul de Lavardens made a most correct bow, thoroughly Parisian.

The ponies were going at such a rate that the meeting was a lightning-like one.

Bettina exclaimed: "Who is this gentleman who has just bowed to us?"

"I had scarcely time to see him, but it strikes me that I know him."

"Good heavens! can it be one of the forty? Is it all going to begin again?"

CHAPTER VI

The same day, about seven o'clock in the evening, Jean called at the Vicarage for the Curé, and both went away in the direction of the Château.

A regular army of workmen had been in possession of the Château for a month, and were making the fortune of the village public-houses. Goods and furniture had been brought from Paris in huge vans. Two days before Mme. Scott's arrival, Mlle. Marbeau, the postmistress, and Mme. Lormier, the Mayor's wife, had insinuated themselves into the Château. Their reports turned the heads of the village matrons. The old furniture had disappeared, and was replaced by wonders and miracles of art. And the stables and the harness-room!—a train had conveyed from Paris, under Edward's care, about ten carriages—and what carriages!—a score of horses—and what horses!

Abbé Constantin believed he knew what luxury was. He was in the habit of dining once

a year with his Bishop, Monseigneur Foubert, an amiable and wealthy prelate, who entertained on a fairly large scale. Up to that time the Curé had thought that nothing in the world could be grander than the "Palais Episcopal" of Souvigny, and the Châteaux of Lavardens and Longueval. Now he began to corroborate what he had heard about the new splendours of Longueval, and found that the grandeur and luxury of modern mansions surpassed anything he ever had seen before.

When the Curé and Jean had walked a few steps along that avenue of the park that led to the Château: "Look, Jean," said the Curé, "what a change. This part of the park had been left uncultivated, and now it is all laid out. I shall not feel so much at home. It will be too grand. I shall not find my old brown velvet arm-chair again, in which I went to sleep so often after dinner. And if I go to sleep tonight, what will become of me? You must keep an eye on me, Jean. If you see me beginning to doze, you must come and pinch me gently behind. Promise me, Jean?"

"I promise you, godfather."

Jean paid little attention to the Curé's words. He longed to see Mme. Scott and Miss Percival

again, but with his impatience was mingled a great anxiety. Would he find them the same in the large drawing-room of Longueval as they had been in the small dining-room at the Vicarage? Instead of those two women so perfectly simple and homely who had enjoyed that unexpected *dînette*, and who, from the first day, had treated him with so much kindness and familiarity, perhaps he would find two pretty, fashionable dolls, elegant, reserved, and correct. Perhaps his first impression would vanish. Or, perhaps, on the contrary, the impression would sink deeper and sweeter into his heart!

They ascended the six large steps of the *perron*, and were met in the spacious hall by two smart footmen with a most dignified and imposing aspect. A great change had taken place in the appearance of the entrance hall. Formerly its walls were quite bare, but now they were hung with splendid tapestry, with designs representing mythological subjects. The old Curé hardly dared to look at these tapestries—quite enough, however, to notice that the goddesses who were walking among the foliage wore costumes of antique simplicity.

One of the footmen threw open the door of the large drawing-room. It was there that the

old Marquise used to stand at the right-hand side of the high mantelpiece, on the opposite side of which was the brown velvet arm-chair. The old-fashioned Empire furniture, which formerly filled the drawing-room, was replaced with beautifully-designed chairs and settees of various shapes and colours, scattered about in apparent disorder, which, however, was really the highest art.

When the Curé and Jean were announced Mme. Scott arose and came to meet them, saying :

"How kind of you to come, M. le Curé! I am so glad to see you, and you too, monsieur. You are my first, my only friends in this country."

Jean felt relieved. It was the same woman.

"Allow me to introduce to you my two children—Harry and Bella. Come on."

Harry was a very nice little boy, six years old, and Bella a very pretty little girl of five; they both had the golden hair and big, dark eyes of their mother.

When the Curé had kissed the two children, Harry, who was looking with admiration at Jean's uniform, said to his mother :

"And the soldier, mamma ; shall we kiss him too?"

"If you like," answered Mme. Scott; "and if he will allow you."

Soon the two children were sitting on Jean's knee, and overwhelming him with questions.

"You are an officer?"

"Yes; I am an officer."

"In what?"

"In the artillery."

"It is the artillerymen who fire the cannon. Oh, how I should like to hear the cannon going off, and to be quite near! You will take us with you, one day, where they fire the cannon, will you?"

Meanwhile, Mme. Scott was speaking to the Curé, and Jean, while talking to the children, was surveying her. She wore a muslin dress, but the muslin was hidden by a profusion of small "volants de Valenciennes" lace. The dress was cut very low, open square in front. Her arms were bare to the elbow; a bouquet of crimson roses was fastened in the corsage, and a single rose nestled in her hair, fastened by a diamond pin—nothing more.

Mme. Scott suddenly noticed that Jean was being monopolized by her two children.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, monsieur. Harry! Bella!"

"Pray leave them with me, madame."

"I am so vexed at making you dine so late! My sister has not yet come down. Ah! here she is!"

Bettina made her appearance in a muslin dress like her sister's, covered with the same costly lace, wearing roses also, and with the same charm, the same pleasant, smiling welcome.

"How do you do, M. le Curé? Have you forgiven me my horrid indiscretion of the other day?"

And turning to Jean, she held out her hand to him, saying:

"Good evening, Monsieur — Monsieur —— Well, now! I cannot remember your name— yet it seems to me that we are old friends already."

"Jean Reynaud."

"Jean Reynaud—that is it. Good evening, M. Jean Reynaud! But I tell you candidly that when we are really old friends—in about a week's time—I shall call you M. Jean. It is a very pretty name, Jean."

Dinner was ready. The governesses came to fetch the children. Mme. Scott passed into the dining-room on the Curé's arm, and Jean escort-

ed Bettina. Before she appeared Jean had said to himself, "Mme. Scott is the prettier!" When he felt Bettina's little hand slipping under his arm, and when she turned to him her exquisite face, he said to himself, "Miss Percival is the prettier!" But he was again perplexed when seated between the two sisters. If he looked on his right he was in danger of falling in love, and quite as much if he looked on his left.

A lively and animated conversation began. The two sisters were delighted with everything. They already had been for a long walk in the park. They had planned a long ride in the forest for the next day. Riding was their hobby, their craze; and it was Jean's also. When, a quarter of an hour later, he was asked to join the riding party, he accepted with delight. Nobody knew the neighbourhood better than Jean did; it was his native country. He would be so glad to have the honour of showing them several lovely spots that they might not be able to find without him!

"You go out riding every day?" asked Bettina.

"Every day, and, as a rule, twice. In the morning, when I am on duty; in the afternoon, for my own pleasure."

"Early in the morning?"

"At half-past five."

"At half-past five, every morning?"

"Yes, Sundays excepted."

"Then you get up?"

"At half-past four."

"And it is daylight?"

"Oh! yes, at this time of the year, broad daylight."

"Fancy getting up at half-past four! Very often we end our day at the time you begin yours. And you like your work?"

"Very much, thank you, mademoiselle. It is well to have one's work clear before one."

"Still," said Mme. Scott, "never to be one's own master—to be obliged always to obey!"

"That is what suits me best. Nothing is easier than obedience! Besides, to learn how to obey is the only way to learn how to command."

"Ah, I quite agree with you."

"So it is," the Curé continued, "but what he does not tell you is that he is carrying all before him in the regiment. He——"

"Don't, godfather, I pray you."

In spite of Jean's remonstrance, the Curé

was going to indulge himself in singing his godson's praise, when Bettina interrupted him.

"It is not necessary, M. le Curé; don't say any more. We know all that you would say. We have taken the liberty of making inquiry about Monsieur—oh, I very nearly said M. Jean—about M. Reynaud—and the reports have been splendid."

"I should like to know," said Jean.

"Nothing—nothing; you shall know nothing. I don't want to make you blush, and you could not help blushing." Then, turning to the Curé, "And about you, too, M. le Curé, we heard reports. It appears you are a saint."

"Oh, there is no mistake about that," exclaimed Jean.

This time it was the Curé who cut short Jean's eloquence. Dinner was nearly over. The old priest had not gone through it without many emotions. On several occasions he had been handed dishes of complicated construction on which he had laid a rather trembling hand lest all should fall down—quivering towers of jelly, pyramids of truffles, fortresses of custard, bastions of pastry, and rocks of ice. Anyhow, Abbé Constantin relished his dinner very much, and did not refuse two or three glasses of cham-

pagne. He did not object to good cheer. No one is perfect, and if greediness is, as it is said to be, a capital sin, a great many good curés will go to Hell!

Coffee was handed round on the terrace before the Château. In the distance was heard the harsh sound of the village clock striking nine; plains and meadows lay in silence. The park only presented faintly defined waving lines. The moon appeared slowly rising above the large trees.

Then Bettina, taking a cigar-box, said to Jean: "Do you like smoking?"

"Yes, thank you, mademoiselle."

"Take one, then, M. Jean. Never mind, I said it. Take. But no, listen first." And in a low voice, meanwhile holding out the box to him, "It is dark now; you will be able to blush at your ease. I will tell you what I refused to tell you just now at the table. An old solicitor of Souvigny, who was your tutor once, came to Paris to settle with my sister about the purchase of the Château. He told us what you did after your father's death, when you were only a child. You know what you did for that poor woman and the young girl. My sister and I were much touched by the recital."

"Yes," interrupted Mme. Scott, "and that is the reason why we are so pleased to see you here to-day. We should not have welcomed everybody in the same manner, you may be sure of it. Come, now, take your cigar; my sister is there, waiting."

Jean found nothing to say. Bettina was there, standing before him, holding the cigar-box in her hand, her eyes fixed intently on Jean's face. She was revelling in this thought:

"I feel that I am in the company of an honest fellow."

"Let us sit down here," said Mme. Scott, "and enjoy this lovely evening. Take your coffee—smoke. How delightful is this intense stillness and calm of the country after the hubbub of Paris! Just let us sit quietly and look at the stars."

They all agreed, and remained for some time without speaking. Suzie and Bettina began to grow fond of that country which had just welcomed them and was to be their home. Jean was not so tranquil—Miss Percival's words had roused in him strong emotions; his mind had not quite recovered its usual equanimity.

But the happiest of them all was Abbé Constantin. He had enjoyed immensely that little

episode which had been such a trial to Jean's modesty. The Abbé adored his godson. The most tender father never more fondly loved his dearest child; very often, when looking at the young officer, he would say to himself, "God has overwhelmed me with kindness. I am a priest and I have a child!"

The Abbé was sinking into a gentle doze; he felt quite at home again—too much at home. His ideas by degrees got mixed, confused, and at last became dreams. He fell fast asleep, very fast indeed. That wonderful dinner and the two or three glasses of wine were answerable for the catastrophe.

Jean had noticed nothing. He had forgotten all about his promise to his godfather; and why had he forgotten it? Simply because he was occupied in gazing at the four little feet which, placed on garden stools, peeped out from beneath the clouds of lace and muslin as their owners lay back lazily in their easy-chairs, and Jean, glancing at them, asked himself, "Which are the smaller?"

While he was trying to solve this problem, Bettina suddenly said in a low voice:

"M. Jean! M. Jean!"

"Mademoiselle!"

"Just look at M. le Curé; he is asleep."

"Oh! dear me! it is my fault!"

"How so! your fault?" asked Mme. Scott, in a low voice too.

"Yes, my godfather gets up very early; he asked me to prevent him from going to sleep when he was dining with Mme. de Longueval. You have made him so much at home that he has again fallen into his old habit."

"Quite right, too," said Bettina. "Don't let us disturb him."

"You are very kind, mademoiselle, but the evening is getting chilly."

"So it is. He might catch cold. Wait, I will go and fetch my cloak."

"I think, mademoiselle, the better plan would be to try to awaken him gently; then he will not know we have seen him asleep."

"Let me do it," said Bettina. "Suzie, let us sing together, very low to begin with, then we will raise our voices a little."

"Very well! But what shall we sing?"

"Let us sing something childish — words suitable to the circumstances."

Suzie and Bettina began to sing:

"If I had but two little wings,
And were a little feathered bird," etc.

Their clear, rich voices had an exquisite sweetness in the deep silence. Abbé Constantin heard nothing, did not stir. Delighted at this little concert, Jean said to himself:

"I hope godfather will not wake up yet!"

However, the voices rose higher and clearer:

"But in my sleep to you I fly,
I'm always with you in my sleep," etc.

And the Abbé was still in the land of dreams.

"How fast asleep he is," said Suzie; "it is a sin to awaken him."

"We must! Louder, Suzie, louder!"

Suzie and Bettina let the harmony of their two voices freely burst out—

"Sleep stays not, though a monarch bids,
So I love to wake ere break of day," etc.

The Curé awoke with a start. After a moment's uneasiness he felt relieved. Most likely, nobody had noticed his being asleep. He drew himself up, stretched himself slowly, cautiously. He was saved.

A quarter of an hour later, the two sisters accompanied the Curé and Jean to the little gate in the park that led to the village, about a hundred steps from the Vicarage. They were ap-

proaching this gate, when suddenly Bettina said to Jean :

"Ah ! now I think of it, monsieur, I have been wishing to ask you a question for the last three hours. On our arrival we met on the road a slender young man with fair mustaches. He was riding a black horse ; he bowed to us in passing."

"It is Paul de Lavardens, a friend of mine. He has already had the honour of being introduced to you and is most anxious to meet you again."

"Well, you can bring him with you some day," said Mme. Scott.

"After the 25th," exclaimed Bettina. "Not before, not before ! No one till then ; we won't have anybody but yourself, M. Jean. It is very strange, and I scarcely know how it happened, but you seem like one of ourselves already. The compliment may not be very well worded, but don't make any mistake about it ; it is a compliment. I mean to be exceedingly kind in saying that."

"And so you are, mademoiselle."

"I am glad if I have been fortunate enough to make myself understood. Good-bye, M. Jean ; we shall see you to-morrow."

Mme. Scott and Miss Percival slowly retraced their steps towards the Château.

"Come, now, Suzie," said Bettina; "give me a regular good scolding. I am expecting it. I have deserved it."

"A scolding! What about?"

"I thought you would say that I have been too familiar with that young man."

"No, indeed, I shall not say so. That young man has made a most favourable impression on me. I feel full confidence in him."

"So do I."

"It strikes me it will be the right thing for us to be friendly with him."

"I am quite willing, for he is the only young man whom I have met since we came to France in whose eyes I have not read legibly written, '*Mon Dieu!* how happy I should be to marry that girl's millions!' However, here we are at home again. Good-night, Suzie. Pleasant dreams."

Mme. Scott visited her children and kissed their sleeping faces fondly.

Bettina remained a long time in the balcony. "I fancy I shall like this country very much," she thought to herself.

CHAPTER VII

The next morning, on returning from drill, Jean found Paul de Lavardens waiting for him at the barracks; he scarcely gave him time to dismount, and he said quickly:

"Now, then, make haste and tell me about the Scotts' dinner. I saw them in the morning. The girl was driving four black ponies; and with all sorts of boldness. Did you speak about me? And did they recognise me? When will you take me to Longueval? But answer me, do answer me!"

"But which question first—the last? When will I take you to Longueval?"

"Yes."

"Well, in about ten days. They don't wish to see any one just now."

"Then you are not going back for ten days?"

"Oh! I shall go back to-day, at four o'clock, but they don't count me as anybody; I am only Jean Reynaud, the Curé's godson—that is why

I gained so easily their confidence. I have presented myself under the patronage of the Church —my character was so guaranteed—and then they have discovered that I could be of some use. As I know the country well, I can act as a guide. In one word, I am nobody, while you, Comte de Lavardens, you are somebody! So do not fret, your turn will come with the entertainments, when they want rank and fashion. Then you will put in an appearance, and I shall return humbly into my obscurity."

"Make fun of me as much as you like. It is no less true that during those ten days you mean to steal a march on me!"

"What do you mean?"

"Come, now, Jean, don't try and make me believe that you are not already in love with one of the two women. Can it be possible? So much beauty! So much luxury! Oh! the luxury is perhaps more powerful than the beauty. Luxury to such a degree, it upsets me. I dreamed of those four black ponies last night, and that little Bettina—is it not?"

"Yes, Bettina."

"Bettina! Comtesse Bettina de Lavardens! Does it not sound nice? And a model husband she would have in me! To be the husband of

an absurdly rich woman, that is my fate! It is not so easy as one might suppose. One must know how to spend, and I feel confident I have given proofs of my capacities; I already have squandered lots of money. If my mother had not stopped me! But I am ready to begin again. Oh, how happy my wife would be! I would make her life a fairy-land. In her surroundings she would feel her husband's skill and taste. We should live like two turtle doves; I would spend my life in dressing her up, in taking her triumphantly through the world. I would study her beauty in order to give it the frame that suited it. 'Were it not for my husband,' she would say, 'I should not be so beautiful.' I should know, not only how to love her, but how to amuse her. She would have her money's worth. Jean, make an effort; introduce me to Mme. Scott to-day, there is a good fellow.'

"I cannot, I assure you."

"Well, then, in ten days' time; but then I warn you I intend to settle down at Longueval and not move. To begin with, it would please my mother. She is still rather prejudiced against the Americans; she says that she shall manage not to see them, but I know my mother. Some day, when I tell her, 'Mother, I have won the

heart of a charming young American with twenty million francs'—they exaggerate when they talk of hundreds of millions; these are the correct figures, and they are quite enough for me—my mother would be delighted, because what is it she wishes for me? What all good mothers wish for their sons, especially when their sons have been a little bit wild—a rich marriage or a discreet liaison with some one in fashionable society. At Longueval I find these two combinations, and either would equally suit me. Only I shall want you to tell me in ten days which of the two you abandon to me—Mme. Scott or Miss Percival?"

"What nonsense!—I don't—I never shall think——"

"Listen, Jean, you are wisdom personified, agreed; you may say and do as you like, but listen and mark my words: Jean, you will meet your fate in that house."

"I don't think so," replied Jean, laughing.

"But I am sure of it. Good-bye! I must now leave you to your duties."

That morning Jean was in earnest. He had no thought of love, he had slept very well the previous night. The second interview with the two sisters had, as if by enchantment, dissipated

the slight trouble that had agitated him after the first meeting. He was prepared to meet them again with much pleasure, but also with much tranquility. There was too much money in that house for a poor devil like Jean to find room honestly there, but he was not averse to friendship; on the contrary, with all his heart he was going to steel himself against their wonderful fascination and not to permit his thoughts to dwell upon their pretty little feet. They had said very frankly and cordially to him that he should be their friend, and he would desire nothing more. During the ten days that followed all conduced to the success of his enterprise. Suzie, Bettina, Abbé Constantin, and Jean led the same life in the closest intimacy and friendship. The two sisters went out for long drives in the morning with the Abbé, and in the afternoon for long rides with Jean.

Jean no longer tried to analyze his feelings, he no longer asked himself whether he should incline to the right or to the left. He felt for these two women an equal affection and an equal devotion. He was perfectly happy, perfectly tranquil. Then he could not be in love, for love and tranquility seldom dwell in the same heart. However, it was not without a little uneasiness

that Jean saw the day approaching when the Turners, the Nortons, and a number of other guests would arrive at the Château.

The day came too soon. On Friday the 24th of June, at four o'clock, Jean arrived at the Château. Bettina welcomed him alone with a depressed air.

"How annoying it is! She—she—my sister is not well. A slight headache, nothing to speak of; she will be all right to-morrow, but I dare not ride without her, alone. In America I might, but here it would not do, would it?"

"Certainly not," replied Jean.

"I must send you back, and it grieves me very much."

"So it does me, very much too, to lose this last ride, which I expected to have with you before I leave; but it cannot be helped! I will come to-morrow to inquire how your sister is."

"She will see you herself to-morrow. It is nothing at all; but don't run away so quickly. I want you to favour me with a quarter of an hour's conversation. I have to speak to you. Please sit down here and listen to me. My sister and I intended this evening to imprison you in a little corner of the drawing-room, and then she meant to tell you what I am going

to try to say for both, in a few words, but I am rather nervous. Don't laugh; it is a very serious matter. We wish to thank you for having been so kind, so attentive, so——"

"Don't, mademoiselle, pray; the obligation is on my side."

"Oh! don't interrupt, you will confuse me and I shall not be able to get through with it. I maintain, besides, that we really are very much indebted to you. We arrived here perfect strangers and immediately found friends; you have taken us by the hand, you have led us to our farmers, our keepers, while your godfather took us to his poor, and everybody loves you so much that, through your recommendation, they begin to like us a little. They worship you in this country—do you know that?"

"I was born here; all these good people have known me from my infancy, and are grateful for what my grandfather and father did for them, and I am of their race—my great-grandfather was a farmer of Bargecourt, a village two miles from here."

"Oh! oh! you appear very proud of that."

"Neither proud nor ashamed."

"I beg your pardon—you made a little movement of pride. Well, I can tell you that my

mother's great-grandfather was a farmer in Brittany. He went to Canada at the end of the last century, when Canada was still French. And you love very much this place where you were born?"

"Very much; but it may be I shall soon be obliged to leave it."

"Why?"

"When I get promoted I shall have to exchange into another regiment; but when I am an old colonel on the retired list I shall come back and end my days here in my father's little cottage."

"Always quite alone?"

"Why quite alone? I hope not."

"You intend to marry, then?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And you look out for it?"

"Oh, dear, no; one may think of marrying, but one ought not to look out for it."

"Yet there are people who look out for it, I can tell you; and people have wanted to marry you."

"How do you know that?"

"Ah, I know all your little affairs so well; you are what they called '*un bon parti*'; and I repeat it, they have tried to marry you."

"Who told you that?"

"M. le Curé."

"Very wrong of him," said Jean, rather crossly.

"Not at all; he was not wrong. If any one has been guilty it was I; but it was through charity, not through idle curiosity, I assure you. I soon discovered that nothing makes your godfather happier than to talk about you; so in the morning, when I am alone driving with him, to please him I talk about you, and he tells me your history. You are well off—very well. You get two hundred and sixteen francs and a few centimes a month from the Government. Come, now, am I not thoroughly acquainted with all particulars?"

"So you are," said Jean, deciding to make the best of the Curé's indiscretion.

"You have an income of eight thousand francs."

"Very nearly; not quite."

"Add to that your house, which is worth thirty thousand francs. At any rate, you are in a very good position, and people have already proposed to you."

"No, they have not!"

"Yes, they have! Twice—and you have

refused two very good marriages, two very large dowries if you choose to call it so; it is the same thing for many people. Two hundred thousand francs on the one side, three hundred thousand on the other. It appears these are large sums for the country, but you have refused. Tell me why! If you knew how anxious I am to know——"

"Well, it concerned two charming young girls."

"That is understood—one always says so."

"But whom I scarcely knew. I was forced—for I did resist—I was forced to spend two or three evenings with them last year."

"What then?"

"Then—I don't quite know how to explain to you, it is really so difficult to say—well, I did not feel attracted, I did not feel the slightest touch of embarrassment, emotion——"

"In fact," said Bettina, resolutely, "not the least suspicion of love."

"No, not the least; and I returned contentedly to my bachelor retreat, for I think it is better not to marry than to marry without love. This is my opinion."

"And it is mine, too!"

She looked at him. He looked at her.

And suddenly to the great surprise of both, they found nothing more to say—nothing at all. Fortunately, at this moment, Harry and Bella rushed into the drawing-room, shouting with excitement:

"M. Jean, M. Jean, you are here! Come and see our ponies."

"Ah!" said Bettina, her voice rather uncertain, "Edwards has just come back from Paris, and has brought for the children two tiny ponies. Let us go and see them—shall we?"

They went to see the ponies, which were indeed worthy to have a place in the stables of the King of Liliput.

CHAPTER VIII

THREE weeks have elapsed. Jean is to start to-morrow to the "Écoles a feu," where he will lead a soldier's life. Ten days he will march on the main roads on his way to the Camp de Cercottes in the Forest d'Orléans, where he is to stay ten more days. The regiment will return on the 10th of August.

Jean is no longer tranquil, no longer happy. He is impatient to leave, although he dreads the parting. He is suffering a real martyrdom; he longs to escape from it. Now twenty days without seeing her, without speaking to her, absolutely without "her," in short; what will become of him? "Her!" It is Bettina; he adores her. Since when? Ever since the first day he saw her, from that meeting in the month of May, in the Curé's garden. That is the truth. But Jean struggles and fights against this truth. He thinks he has only loved Bettina since the day they were both talking cheerfully in a friendly way in the sitting-room on the blue couch, when

Bettina had amused herself, while talking, repairing a Japanese princess—Bella's doll—which was lying on an arm-chair, and which she had mechanically picked up.

Why had the fancy come to Miss Percival to talk to him about those young girls whom he might have married! The question, however, had not embarrassed him at all.

He had replied that, if he had not felt any inclination for marriage, it was because his interviews with these two girls had caused him neither emotion nor agitation. He had been smiling while speaking, but a few moments afterward he had smiled no more. This emotion and agitation! He suddenly knew what they were. He did not try to deceive himself; he at once realized the depth of the wound; it had struck home to the heart.

Jean, however, did not despair. The same day, on leaving, he said to himself, "Yes, it is serious, very much so, but I shall get over it." He looked for an excuse for his madness, and laid the blame upon circumstances. This lovely girl had been too much alone with him. How could he resist such a temptation? He had yielded to the intoxication of her charms. But on the morrow twenty persons would come to

the Château, and it would be the end of that dangerous intimacy. He would have courage, he would keep at a distance. To see her no more; he could not think of it. But he would be Bettina's friend, since he could be nothing but her friend. For there was another thought that never came to his mind—this thought would have appeared not only extravagant to him but monstrous. There was no man more loyal than Jean in the whole world, and Bettina's money was hateful to him, positively hateful.

The number of visitors since the 25th of June had overrun Longueval. Mme. Norton had arrived with her son Daniel, also Mme. Turner, with her son Philip, both of whom belonged to the brotherhood of the thirty-four.

They were old friends; Bettina had treated them as such, and had declared to them with a plain frankness that they were wasting their time. They were not discouraged, however, but formed the centre of a little court, very eager, very assiduous, around Bettina.

Paul de Lavardens had made his appearance on the scene, and had rapidly become everybody's favourite. He had received the brilliant and complicated education of a young man whose life was devoted to pleasure. When it

was a question of amusements—riding, lawn tennis, polo, dancing, charades, or plays—he was always ready; he excelled in all of them. His superiority was conspicuous, and made itself felt. He was instituted, with general consent, the leader and organizer of Longueval entertainments.

Bettina had not a minute's hesitation. Jean had just introduced her to Paul de Lavardens, and the usual complimentary words of greeting were hardly concluded, when Bettina, leaning towards Suzie, whispered in her ear, "The Thirty-fifth!" However, she welcomed Paul de Lavardens well; so well that he had the weakness to mistake it. He believed that his personal graces had obtained for him this very amiable and cordial reception. It was a great mistake. He had been introduced by Jean, and on that account only Bettina took an interest in him.

Mme. Scott kept open house at her Château; people were not invited for one evening, but for every evening; and Paul with enthusiasm had begun to be present on every occasion. His dream was realized. He had found Paris at Longueval! But Paul was neither a fool nor a self-satisfied fop; he did not delude himself.

Without doubt he was the recipient of very particular attention and favours from Miss Percival; she delighted to have long, very long, *tête-à-tête* with him; but what was the eternal, the endless subject of their chats? Jean, still Jean, always Jean! Paul was careless, giddy, extravagant, but he would become serious when Jean was in question; he knew how to appreciate him, how to love him. Nothing was more agreeable to him than to express his high opinion of his lifelong friend. And as he saw that Bettina took pleasure in listening to him, Paul gave free course to his eloquence.

One evening Paul—and this was quite right—determined to get the benefit of his chivalrous behaviour. He had been talking for a quarter of an hour with Bettina. The conversation over, he went to look for Jean at the other end of the drawing-room, and said to him—

"You left the field open to me, and I completely besieged Miss Percival."

"Well, you have no reason to be dissatisfied at the result of the enterprise. You are now very great friends."

"Yes, certainly. Things are going on nicely, but not to my liking. There is nobody more amiable or more charming than Miss Percival,

and I take some credit in acknowledging it, for, between ourselves, she makes me play a thankless and absurd rôle, a rôle which does not suit my age. I meant to be a suitor. It will not do for me to act as a confidant."

"Confidant?"

"Quite so! This is my occupation in this house. Listen! You were looking at us just now. Oh, I am sharp-sighted. You were looking at us. Well, do you know what we were talking about? About you! About you only! And it is the same thing every evening. A regular cross-examination. 'You were brought up together? You took lessons from Abbé Constantin? He will soon be captain? and then commandant? and then colonel?' etc., etc. Ah, Jean, old fellow, if you choose to dream a beautiful dream!"

Jean took this amiss, became almost angry.

Paul was amazed at this fit of bad temper. "What is the matter with you? I don't think I said anything——"

"Forgive me; I was wrong. But why do you allow such an absurd idea to enter your mind?"

"Absurd idea! I don't see it. I entertained it on my own account."

'Ah, you!"

"What do you mean? If I have had it, you might as well. You are better than I."

"Don't, Paul, I pray you!" Jean's uneasiness was evident.

"All right; don't let us talk of it any more. What I meant is this. Miss Percival thinks me very nice, very nice; but as to thinking of me seriously that little person does not, and never will. I must fall back upon Mme. Scott, but without much confidence. You know I can. I shall enjoy myself very much in this house, but I shall not bother about anything; it would not pay me."

Paul did fall back upon Mme. Scott, but the next day he had the surprise of seeing Jean standing in his way. The latter, in fact, began to take a place in the private circle of Mme. Scott, who, like Bettina, had her little court.

Jean came there to find a shelter, a place of refuge. The day of that never-to-be-forgotten conversation upon loveless marriage, Bettina, too, had suddenly felt that want of love which sleeps, but not very profoundly, in the hearts of all young girls. The sensation had been the same, at the same moment, in both Jean and Bettina's hearts.

He, frightened, had abruptly retreated. She, on the contrary, had yielded with all the candour of her perfect innocence to this first case of love. She had waited for love. Could this be love? Could Jean be the man who was to be her thought, her life, her soul? Why not? She knew him better than she knew any of those who, during the past year, had hovered around her fortune, and in all that she knew of him there was nothing to discourage an honest girl's confidence and love. Far from it!

Both indeed were right; both were behaving according to duty and truth; she in yielding, he in resisting. She in not thinking for a minute of Jean's humbleness and poverty; he in drawing back before that mountain of millions as he would have done before a crime. She in not arguing with love; he in considering it was his duty not to argue with honour.

This is why, as Bettina was growing more and more tender, Jean was growing, every day, more restless and more gloomy. He was not only afraid of loving—he was afraid of being loved.

He ought to have given up coming, to have remained away. He had tried hard, but he could

not. The temptation was too strong and overcame him.

When he would come, she would meet him, extending her hand to him, greeting him, smiling with her clear eyes filled with joy. Everything in her seemed to say, "Let us try to love each other, and, if we can, we will!"

Then fear would seize him. Those two little hands which came to the grasp of his hands he hardly dared to touch. He endeavoured to avoid those sweet eyes, which were anxiously and inquiringly seeking his gaze. He trembled to have to speak to Bettina, to have to listen to her. It was then that he would take refuge with Mme. Scott, and it was then that Mme. Scott received those disconnected, confused words which were not really addressed to her, but which she would yet take for herself.

Suzie could not help being mistaken. Bettina had said nothing to her of the vague and ill-defined feelings which stirred her heart. She kept and cherished the secret of her love as a miser would have done with the first coins of his treasure.

One day, when she should see clearly into the heart—the day when she should be sure that she

loved—ah ! how gladly she would speak, and tell Suzie all about it !

Mme. Scott therefore attributed to herself Jean's melancholy, which every day went on increasing. She was flattered by it—a woman is never ill-pleased at being loved—but although flattered she was vexed at the same time. She thought very highly of Jean ; she had a great regard for him, and she felt wretched at being the cause of his sorrow.

Suzie, besides, was conscious of her own innocence. With other men she was somewhat of a coquette, and rather given to flirtation. To torment them, was it a great crime ? They had nothing to do ; they were good for nothing ; it was an occupation to them ; meanwhile, it amused her. It helped them to pass their time, and it helped her too. But Suzie was not guilty of anything of the sort with Jean. She had not been in the least coquettish with him. She realized his superiority. He was above the others ; he was capable of suffering seriously, and that was what she did not wish. Already, on two or three occasions, she had thought of giving him a lecture, very quietly and affectionately ; but she had reflected. Jean was going away for a time. On his return, if it were still necessary

she would speak to him, and would manage that love should not come and stupidly interfere with their friendship.

So Jean was to leave the next day. Bettina had insisted, with all her power, that he should spend the last day at Longueval, and should dine with them.

Jean had refused, pleading his occupations on the eve of this departure. He arrived in the evening, however, at about half-past ten. He had walked, and several times on the way he had thought of returning.

"If I had courage enough I would not see her again," he said to himself. "I am going to-morrow, and shall not come back to Longueval as long as she is there. This is my resolution, and I mean to keep it."

But he went on his way. He would see her again for the last time.

As he entered the drawing-room, Bettina sprang forward to meet him.

"Here you are at last! How late it is!"

"I have been very busy."

"And you go to-morrow?"

"Yes, I do."

"Early?"

"At five in the morning."

"You will go by the road that runs by the wall of the park, and leads through the village?"

"Yes, that is the road by which we shall go."

"Why at such an early hour? I should have gone to see you pass and to wish you good-bye from the terrace."

Bettina held and kept Jean's trembling hand in hers. He disengaged himself with a painful effort.

"I must go," said he, "and pay my respects to your sister."

"Wait a moment—she has not noticed you—she is surrounded by ten people. Come and sit down a little while near me."

He had to seat himself by her side.

"We, too," she said, "are leaving this place."

"Are you really?"

"Yes; an hour ago we received a telegram from my brother-in-law, which has caused us great joy. He was not to have returned for another month, but it appears he will be here in twelve days' time; he will sail the day after to-morrow from New York on board the Labrador. We are going to meet him at Havre. We shall set out the day after to-morrow. We are going

to take the children with us; the change of air will do them good. My brother-in-law will be delighted to make your acquaintance. I must not say 'make acquaintance,' for he knows you already. We have spoken of you in all our letters. I am sure you will get on wonderfully together. He is extremely kind. How long will you be away?"

"Twenty days."

"Twenty days—in a camp?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, in the Camp de Cercottes."

"In the middle of the Forêt d'Orléans. I got your godfather to explain it to me this morning. I am very glad, of course, to go to meet my brother-in-law, but at the same time I am sorry to leave here. Were it not for our departure, I would have gone every morning to pay a little visit to your godfather—he would have given me news of you. Will you, in about ten days, write to my sister just a few lines—that will not take up much of your time—just to tell her how you are getting on, and that you don't quite forget us?"

"Ah! as to forgetting you, as to losing the remembrance of your grace, of your kindness. Never, mademoiselle! Never!"

His voice quivered. He rose up lest his emotion should betray him.

"I must really go, mademoiselle, and pay my respects to your sister. She is looking at me. She must be surprised."

He crossed the drawing-room. Bettina's eyes followed him.

Mme. Norton had just seated herself at the piano to play a waltz for the young people to dance to. Paul de Lavardens rushed to Bettina.

"Will you do me the honour of dancing this waltz with me, mademoiselle?"

"Well," she replied, "I believe I have just promised it to M. Jean."

"Very well. But if it is not Jean—will it be I?"

"That is understood."

Bettina went to Jean, who had just seated himself near Mme. Scott.

"I have just told a story," she said. "M. de Lavardens has just invited me for this waltz, and I replied that I was engaged, and to you, for it. You will dance with me, will you not?"

To press her in his arms, to breathe the perfume of her hair! Jean felt his strength failing. He dared not accept.

"I am extremely sorry, mademoiselle, I cannot. I don't feel very well to-night. I was most anxious to come, I would not have left without saying good-bye, but I feel quite unfit to dance."

As the prelude began, Paul de Lavardens made an attempt to reach Bettina.

"Well," said he, gleefully, "who is it to be—he or I?"

"You," said she, sadly, without turning her eyes away from Jean.

She was upset and replied, hardly knowing what she said. She immediately regretted having accepted. She wished to stay there, near Jean. But it was too late. Paul took her by the hand, and dashed through a waltz.

Jean rose; he stared at the two—Bettina and Paul; a mist passed before his eyes. He suffered an agony. "I have but one thing to do," thought he to himself, "to take advantage of this waltz and go. To-morrow morning I will write a note of apology to Mme. Scott."

He reached the door—he looked no more at Bettina. Had he looked he would have stayed.

But Bettina looked at him, and suddenly she said to Paul:

"Thank you, monsieur, but I feel rather tired. Let us stop, if you please. You will excuse me, will you not?"

Paul offered his arm.

"No, thank you," said she.

The door was just closing, Jean was no longer there. Bettina ran across the drawing-room.

Paul remained alone in astonishment, not understanding what was the matter.

Jean was already at the hall door, when he heard a voice calling him.

"M. Jean! M. Jean!"

He stopped and turned. She was near him.

"You are going without saying adieu to me!"

"Pardon me, I feel dreadfully tired."

"Then don't walk back. The weather is threatening."

She stretched her hand out.

"Look, it is beginning to rain."

"Oh, very slightly."

"Come and have a cup of tea alone with me, in the parlour, and I will tell them to drive you home." Then, addressing one of the footmen, "Tell the coachman to have the coupé ready at once."

"No, thank you, mademoiselle, I pray you,

The open air will do me good. I want to walk. Let me go."

"Go, then! But you have no overcoat. Take my plaid to wrap yourself in."

"I shall not be cold. While you with that open dress—I shall have to persuade you to go in."

Without even holding out his hand to her, he jumped up and rapidly descended the steps.

"If I touch her hand," thought he, "I am lost, I shall betray my secret."

His secret! He did not know Bettina could read his heart like an open book.

When Jean reached the bottom of the stairs he had a moment's hesitation. These words were upon his lips: "I love you! I adore you! and that is why I will see you no more!"

But he did not utter his words; he went away, and soon vanished into the darkness.

Bettina remained there standing on the steps, in the luminous frame of the door. Two great drops of rain blown by the wind fell upon her bare shoulders, and a shiver passed through her; she took no notice; her bosom heaved with mingled emotions.

"I knew well he loved me," she thought,

"but now I know for certain that I love him, too. Ah, yes! I too!"

Suddenly in one of the large doors—in the hall door—she saw the reflection of the two footmen, who stood motionless near the oak table in the hall. Bettina walked a few steps in the direction of the drawing-room. She heard bursts of laughter, and the sound of the waltz still going on. She stopped short. She wished to be alone with herself, and addressing one of the footmen, she said:

"Tell Mme. Scott that I am tired, and gone to my room."

Annie, her maid, was dozing on her chair. Bettina sent her away. She would undress herself. She sank down upon the sofa. She experienced a delicious sensation.

Presently the door of her room opened. It was Mme. Scott.

"You are not well, Bettina?"

"Oh, it is you, Suzie, dear! I am glad you have come. Sit down close to me."

She childishly nestled in her sister's arms, caressing Suzie's shoulders with her burning head. Then suddenly she burst out sobbing—great sobs which suffocated her.

"Bettina, my darling, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing—it is joy."

"Joy?"

"Yes—yes—I will tell you; but let me cry a little. It will relieve me. Don't be frightened; it is all right."

Suzie kissed away the tears of Bettina, who by degrees grew calm and quiet.

"It is over, it is over, I can tell you. It is about Jean."

"Jean! You call him Jean?"

"Yes, I call him Jean. Have you not noticed how sad and pensive he has been for some time?"

"Yes, I have."

"When he came, he immediately went near you, and stayed there, silent and depressed to such a degree that for some time—forgive me for speaking so frankly; it is my way, you know—I wondered if it were not you whom he loved, my darling; it would have been so natural! But no, it was not you, it was me."

"You?"

"Yes, indeed! Listen! He hardly dared to look at me. He avoided me. He fled from me. He was afraid of me; this is a fact. Well, come now, am I frightfully ugly? No, that I am not.

Ah, it was not me of whom he was afraid; it was my money, my horrid money. This very money which attracts all the others, and tempts them so much—this money frightens him, makes him despair, because he is different from the others, because he——"

"My darling, take care; perhaps you make a mistake."

"Oh, no, no, I make no mistake. Just now, on the terrace, when leaving, he said a few words to me. These words were nothing. But you should have seen his emotion in spite of all his efforts to control it! Suzie, dear, my conviction is this. If I had been a penniless girl, instead of Miss Percival, Jean would then have clasped my hand, and confessed he loved me, and if he had spoken so to me, do you know what I should have replied?"

"That you loved him, dear?"

"Yes; and that is why I feel so happy. With me it is a fixed idea that I must adore my husband. Well, I don't mean to say that I adore Jean, no, not yet; but it is beginning, Suzie, and it is beginning so sweetly!"

"Bettina, it makes me uneasy to see you in such a state of excitement. I am glad that M. Reynaud should be attached to you."

"Oh! more than that; indeed, more than that."

"Let us say he should love you, if you like. Yes, when I come to think of it, I believe you are right. He loves you; and are you not worthy of being loved? As to Jean—it is catching, decidedly; I, too, call him Jean—well, you know what I think of him. For a month we have both had the opportunity of judging him. I rank him very high. But, in spite of that, is he a suitable husband for you?"

"Yes, if I love him."

"I am trying to speak sensibly to you, and you always— Well, Bettina, I have experience which you cannot have. Since our arrival in Paris, we have been launched into a very fast and very brilliant sphere. You might have been already marquise or princess if you had liked."

"Yes, but I did not like."

"Are you sure you would not mind being called 'Mme. Reynaud?'"

"Not in the least, if I love the man."

"Ah! you return always to the same point."

"Because that is the only question; there is no other. Now, I will be reasonable. I grant that this question is not quite settled; perhaps I

allowed myself to be carried away a little too quickly. You see how reasonable I am. Jean is going away to-morrow. I shall not see him for twenty days. During these twenty days I shall have time to examine myself, to study myself—in short, to know my own mind. Beneath my apparent thoughtlessness, I am serious and sensible—you know that?"

"Yes, I know it."

"Well, I will address this petition to you, as I would have addressed it to our mother, had she been here. If in twenty days I say to you, 'Suzie, I know now for certain that I love him!' then will you allow me to go to him myself, and ask him if he will have me for his wife? This is what you did with Richard. Say, Suzie, that you will allow me."

"Well, yes, I will."

Bettina kissed her sister, and murmured these words in her ear:

"Thank you, mamma!"

"Mamma! mamma! it was thus you used to call me when you were quite a child, when we were alone in the world, we two, when I undressed you in our little bedroom in New York, when I laid you in your bed, when I sang you to sleep. And, since then, Bettina, I have had

a sole desire in the world—your happiness. This is why I beseech you to reflect, to think it over. Don't answer me now. Don't let us talk any more of that. I wish to leave you quite calm and tranquil. You have sent away Annie, so you wish me to be your dear little mamma again to-night, to put you in bed as I used to do."

"Yes, do, please."

"And you promise me to be good when you are in bed?"

"As good as an angel."

"You will do your best to go to sleep?"

"I will."

"Very quietly, without thinking of anything?"

"Yes, indeed, without thinking of anything."

"That is right."

Ten minutes afterward, Bettina's pretty head nestled amid embroideries and lace. Suzie said to her sister:

"I am going down to those people who bore me very much this evening. Before going to my own room I shall come to see whether you are asleep. Do not speak—go to sleep."

She went away. Bettina remained alone. She honestly endeavoured to go to sleep; she made efforts, but did not quite succeed.

She fell into a light slumber, a kind of doze, which left her floating between dream and reality. Although she had promised to think of nothing, she thought of him, always of him, but vaguely, confusedly. How long a time passed she could not tell, when suddenly it struck her that some one was walking in her room. She half opened her eyes, and recognised her sister. In a soft, sleepy voice, she said, "You know I love him."

"Hush! You sleep!"

"I am asleep."

Then she went to sleep, not so soundly, however, as usual, for at about four o'clock a noise startled her, a noise which the night before would not have disturbed her slumber. A heavy rain fell in torrents, and was beating against her windows.

"Oh! it is pouring," she thought; "he will get wet through." That was her first thought. She rose, crossed the room barefooted, and half opened the shutters. The day had broken, gray and lowering; the sky was charged with clouds, the wind blew a gale, and its gusts drove the rain about in eddying torrents. Bettina did not go back to bed. She felt it would be quite impossible to go to sleep again. She put on a

dressing-gown, and stood there at the window; she watched the incessant rain. Since he must go, she would have liked the weather to have been nice. She would have liked bright sunshine to have cheered his first *étape*. When she came to Longueval one month ago, what *étape* meant she had entirely ignored. Now she knew it was twenty or thirty miles' march, with one hour's rest for dinner. She learned it through the Abbé Constantin, during their morning visits among the poor, when she overwhelmed the Curé with questions about military affairs, especially those concerning the artillery.

Twenty or thirty miles under this deluge. Poor Jean! Bettina thought of young Turner, then of young Norton, then of Paul de Lavardens, who would sleep comfortably till ten in the morning, while Jean would be exposed to the rain. Paul de Lavardens, this man awoke in her a painful memory—the memory of that waltz the previous evening. To have to dance while Jean's grief was so obvious! That waltz took the proportions of a crime in Bettina's eyes. Why, it was horrible what she had done, and, after all, had not she been lacking in courage and frankness in that last talk with Jean? He neither could nor dared say anything, but she

might have shown more sympathy, more confidence. Suffering and sad as he was, she never should have allowed him to have gone back on foot. She ought to have detained him at any cost. Bettina's brain worked itself to a fever heat. Jean must have kept the impression that she was a wicked, heartless, pitiless little creature.

And in half-an-hour he was going away for twenty days. Ah! if she could only—why, there was a way! The regiment must pass along the wall of the park, under the terrace. Bettina was seized with a wild desire to go to see Jean pass. Seeing her there at such an hour, he would understand that she had come to ask his pardon for her cruelty of the previous evening. Yes, she would go. On the other hand, she had promised Suzie to be as good as an angel; and to do what she was about to do, was that being as good as an angel? Oh, never mind, she would make up for it by acknowledging all to Suzie later on, and she would be forgiven.

It was decided she would go—she would go. Only what had she to put on? She had nothing but her evening-dress, a muslin dressing-gown, tiny, high-heeled slippers, and blue satin dancing shoes. To ring the bell for her maid would

never do; besides, there was a hurry—a quarter to five! The regiment would start at five o clock. She might manage with the muslin dressing-gown and the satin shoes. In the hall she might find her small "sabots" and the big cloak that she wore for driving in wet weather. She half opened the door with infinite care.

Everybody slept in the Château. She glided along the walls, into the passage, she descended the staircase. Provided the little sabots be there in their place; that is her great anxiety. There they are! She fastens them up on the top of her dancing-shoes; she wraps herself up in the big cloak. She hears the rain, that has redoubled in violence. She notices one of those large umbrellas which the footman uses on the box when it is raining; she takes it up; she is ready. But when she is about to go out, she notices that the hall door is closed with a great iron bar. She tries to take it off, but it resists her efforts. The big clock strikes five. He is starting at that moment; she is determined to see him. Her will gets irritated at these obstacles.

She makes a great effort; the bar yields, slips back in the hinges, but Bettina has scratched her hand and a slender stream of blood runs out of the scratch. Bettina twists her handker-

chief round her hand, takes her big umbrella, turns the key in the lock and opens the door.

At last she is out! The weather is horrible! The rain and the wind rage together. It takes five or six minutes to reach the terrace which overlooks the road. Bettina, completely hidden under her huge umbrella, starts forward boldly. She has made a few steps. All at once, furious and blinding, a sudden squall overtakes her, fills out her mantle, carries her away, lifts her almost from the ground, turns her umbrella inside out. And that is nothing; soon the disaster is complete. Bettina has lost one of her sabots. They were not genuine sabots, they were tiny, dear little things for fine weather.

And at this moment, when Bettina in despair struggles against the tempest, with her satin shoe sinking into the wet sand, at this moment the wind carries to her the distant echo of the military flourish. The regiment is starting!

Bettina takes a great resolution, she abandons her umbrella, finds her little sabot, fastens it as well as she can, and starts running with a deluge over her head. Then at last she is in the wood; she is a little sheltered by the trees. Another blast, nearer this time.

Bettina fancies she hears the rolling of the

gun-carriages. She makes a last effort. There is the terrace. She is there.

She is just in time! She perceives the white horses of the trumpeters twenty yards off, and along the road she vaguely sees, through the fog, the line of ordnance. She shelters herself under one of the old limes that border the terrace. She watches, she waits.

He is there among that confused mass of riders. Will she be able to recognise him? And he, will he see her? Will any chance make him turn his head that way?

Bettina knows that he is lieutenant in the second battery of his regiment; she knows that a battery is composed of six cannons and six ammunition wagons. It is from Abbé Constantin she has learned that. Thus she will allow the first battery to pass; that is to say, six cannon, six wagons, and then—he will be there.

There he is at last, wrapped in his thick cloak, and it is he who recognises her first. A while before he had remembered a long walk which he had had with her one evening on that terrace, in the twilight. He had raised his head, and, at the very place where he remembered having been so happy near her, he found her again.

He bowed to her, and bare-headed under the

pelting rain, turning round in his saddle as long as he could see, he stared at her. He said again to himself what he had said the previous evening, "This is the last time!" With a gesture of both hands she returned his farewell, and this gesture, repeated several times, brought her hands so near, so very near her lips, that one might have fancied— "Ah!" she thought, "if, after that, he does not understand that I love him, and does not forgive me my money!"

CHAPTER IX

It was the 10th of August, the day that should bring Jean back to Longueval.

Bettina awoke very early, got up and ran at once to the window. The feeble light of sunrise scarcely dissipated the morning mist. Last night the sky had been threatening and heavy with clouds. Bettina had slept but little, and all night long had said to herself, "Provided it does not rain."

The weather was to be glorious. Bettina, who was rather superstitious, gained hope and courage. "The day begins well, so it will end well," thought she.

M. Scott had returned home some days before. Suzie, Bettina, and the children waited for him on the quay at Havre. After exchanging embraces, Richard, addressing his sister-in-law, said:

"Well, when is the wedding to be?"

"What wedding?"

"Why, yours, with M. Jean Reynaud!"

"Ah, my sister told you?"

"Not at all. Suzie has not told me anything. It is yourself, Bettina; for the last three months all your letters have been full of that young man."

"All my letters?"

"Yes, indeed; and you have written oftener and longer than usual. I don't complain of that, but, I ask, when will you introduce me to my future brother-in-law?"

M. Scott was joking, but Bettina replied:

"Soon, I expect."

M. Scott saw that it was a serious affair. In the railway carriage Bettina asked for her letters to Richard. She read them through again. It was indeed only with Jean that all the letters had been filled. She found their first meeting described with minutest details. There was Jean's portrait in the Vicarage garden with his straw hat and his china basin, and then it was again M. Jean, always M. Jean. She found out that she had loved him longer than she had thought.

Now it is the 10th of August. Luncheon is just over at the Château. Harry and Bella are impatient. They know that between one and two o'clock the regiment must go through the village. They had been promised to be taken to see the soldiers pass, and for them, as for Bettina,

the return of the Ninth Artillery was a great event.

"Aunt Betty," said Bella, "Aunt Betty, come with us."

"Yes, do come," said Harry. "We shall see our friend Jean on his big gray horse."

Bettina made resistance, refused, and yet, with a temptation. But no, she would not go, she would not see Jean again until the evening, when she would have with him that decisive talk for which she had been preparing herself during twenty days.

The children set off with their governess. Bettina, Suzie, and Richard went to sit in the park, close to the Château, and, as soon as they were settled:

"Suzie," said Bettina, "I am going to remind you to-day of your promise. You remember what happened on the night of M. Jean's departure. We agreed that if, on the day of his return, I could say to you, 'Suzie, I am certain that I love him,' we agreed that you would allow me to ask him frankly whether he would have me for his wife."

"Yes, I promised you; but are you quite sure?"

"Quite. I warn you that I mean to bring

him to this very place," she added, laughing, "to this seat—and to speak to him in the same way that you did to Richard. That proved to be a success for you, Suzie—you are perfectly happy. And that is what I wish to be, Richard; Suzie has told you about M. Reynaud?"

"Yes, she has told me that she thought more highly of him than of any other man, but——"

"But she has told you, too, that it will be rather a homely marriage, a little beneath me. Oh, naughty sister! Will you believe, Richard, that I cannot get this fear out of her mind? She does not understand that, above all, I wish to love and be loved. Will you believe it, Richard, that last week she set me a horrible snare? You know that there is in the world a certain Prince Romanelli?"

"Yes, I know you might have been a princess. I don't think that it would have been very difficult."

"Well, one day I unfortunately told Suzie that, as a last resource, Prince Romanelli seemed to me acceptable. Just imagine what she did. The Turners were at Trouville. Suzie had arranged a whole plot. We had luncheon with the Prince—but the result was disastrous. Accept-

able! Dear me! During the two hours that I passed in his company, I was continually asking myself how I could have said such a thing. No, Richard! No, Suzie! I will be neither princess, nor countess, nor marchioness! I will be Mme. Jean Reynaud—if M. Jean Reynaud agrees to it, which is not certain."

The regiment entered the village, and suddenly martial music sounded from afar. All three kept silent. It was the regiment—it was Jean who passed—the sound diminished, died away—and Bettina continued:

"No, that is not certain. He loves me, however, and very much indeed, but without knowing very well what I am. I think that I deserve to be loved in another way. I think he would not be so shy if he knew me better, and that is why I ask you to allow me to speak to him plainly and freely."

"We will allow you," replied Richard. "We will allow you. We know that you will never do anything but what is right and proper."

"At least I will try."

The children came back to them. They had seen Jean. He was quite white with dust; he had said good-morning to them.

"Truly," added Bella, "he has not been very

nice; he did not stop to talk to us; he does generally, but this morning he would not."

"Yes, he would," replied Harry, "for at first he made a movement as if he were going to stop, then he changed his mind and went away."

"Well, he did not stop, and it is such fun to talk to a soldier, especially when he is on horseback."

"It is not that. It is that we are very fond of him. If you knew, daddy, how kind he is, and how nicely he plays with us!"

"And what beautiful drawings he makes! Harry, don't you remember that big figure of Punch with his stick, that was so good?"

"Yes, and there was also such a funny cat—Judy's cat."

Both children went away speaking of their friend Jean.

"Decidedly," said M. Scott, "everybody in the house likes him."

"And you will be like everybody else when you know him," replied Bettina.

The regiment broke into a trot along the main road after leaving the village. Here was the terrace where Bettina had stood the other morning, Jean thought to himself. Supposing

she should be there! He hardly knew whether he feared or desired it. He raised his head—he looked—she was not there. He had not seen her again. He will not see her again—for a long time, at least.

He will set out the same evening by the six o'clock train for Paris. One of the chief functionaries in the War Department takes an interest in him. He will try to get himself sent to another garrison.

At Cercotte Jean has reflected much, and the result of his reflection is that he cannot—he must not—be Bettina's husband.

The men dismount at the barrack-yard. Jean takes leave of his colonel and his comrades. He may go—yet he does not go. He glances around him. How happy he was three months ago when he went out of that great yard amid the crash of the cannons rolling over the pavement of Souvigny! Formerly his life was there. Where was it to be now?

He goes home. He goes up to his own room. He writes to Mme. Scott. He tells her that his duty obliges him to leave at once; he cannot dine with them. He prays Mme. Scott to remember him to Miss Bettina. Bettina! Ah, what trouble it was to write that name! He

closes his letter. He will send it immediately. He begins his preparations for departure. Then he will go to say farewell to his godfather. That is the hardest. He will tell him that it will only be a short absence.

He opens one of the drawers of his bureau to take out some money. A little blue note is the first thing that catches his eye. It is the only note that he ever had received from her. "Will you be so kind as to give to the bearer the book you spoke of yesterday? It will be a little too dry, I am afraid. However, I should like to try it. We shall see you to-night. Come as soon as you can."

It is signed "Bettina." Jean reads these short lines again and again. His eyes are brimming now. "It is all that is left me of her," he thought.

Meanwhile the Abbé Constantin is *tête-à-tête* with Pauline. They are settling accounts. The financial situation is splendid. More than two thousand francs in the coffer, and the wishes of Suzie and Bettina are fulfilled; there are no more poor in the neighbourhood. Pauline has even sometimes scruples of conscience. "You see, M. le Curé," says she, "perhaps we give a little too freely. It begins to be rumoured that charity

can always be found here, and do you know what will happen some day? People will take up poverty as a profession here at Longueval."

The Abbé gave fifty francs to Pauline. She went away to take them to a poor woman who had broken her leg by tumbling off a hay cart.

The Abbé Constantin remained alone in the Vicarage. He was rather low-spirited. He had watched the passing of the regiment, and Jean, who had stopped for one minute, had looked depressed. For some time the Abbé had noticed that Jean was no longer as merry and cheerful as he used to be. The Curé did not worry about it, believing it to be one of those little troubles which did not concern an old priest. But this day Jean's preoccupation was very evident. "I will come back directly, godfather," he had said; "I want to speak to you."

He had turned abruptly away. The Abbé had not even had time to give Loulou his lump of sugar, or rather his lumps of sugar, for he had put five or six into his pocket, considering that Loulou had well deserved this treat by ten long days' march and twenty nights passed in the open air. Besides, since Mme. Scott's arrival at the Château, Loulou had very often had several lumps of sugar. The Abbé Constantin had be-

come extravagant, prodigal; he felt he was a millionaire—the sugar for Jean's horse was one of his follies. One day he even had been on the point of addressing to Loulou his everlasting little speech, "This comes from the new châtelaines of Longueval. Pray for them to-night."

It was three o'clock when Jean arrived at the Vicarage, and the Curé said hurriedly:

"You told me that you wanted to speak to me. What is it about?"

"About something, godfather, which will surprise you, will grieve you, and which grieves me too. I have come to bid you farewell."

"Farewell! You are going away?"

"Yes, I am going away."

"When?"

"This very day—in two hours."

"In two hours? But we were going to dine at the Château to-night."

"I have just written to Mme. Scott to apologize—I am absolutely obliged to go."

"Immediately?"

"Immediately."

"And where are you going?"

"To Paris."

"To Paris? Why this sudden determination?"

"Not so sudden; I have thought of it for a long time."

"And you have not told me anything about it —Jean, something has happened! You are a man and I have no business to treat you as a child. But you know how I love you—if you are in trouble, why not tell me? I might perhaps give you good advice. Jean, why go to Paris?"

"I did not mean to tell you, it will give you pain—but you have the right to know. I am going to Paris to ask to be changed into another regiment."

"Into another regiment! To leave Souvigny?"

"Yes, that is it; to leave Souvigny for a time —for a short time only, but to leave Souvigny is necessary."

"And I, Jean—you don't think of me. For a little time—a little time; but that is all that remains to me of life—a little time. And during these last days that I owe to God, it was my happiness—yes, Jean, my happiness—to feel you here near me. And now you are going away. Jean! wait a little! be patient! it will not be very long! Wait until God has called me to Him, wait until I am there, in the cemetery close

by, laid near your father and mother. Don't go, Jean, don't go."

"If you love me, I love you, and you know it well."

"Yes, I know it."

"I have just the same fondness for you now that I felt when I was a mere boy, when you took care of me, when you brought me up. My heart has never changed and never will. But suppose honour and duty compel me to go?"

"Ah, if it is honour and duty I shall say no more, Jean; they stand before all. I have always known you a good judge of your honour and duty. Go, my boy, go! I ask nothing more; I don't want to know more!"

"Never mind, I will tell you all," cried Jean, overcome by his emotion. "And it is better that you should know all. You will stay here! You will return to the Château! You will see her! her!"

"Her? Who?"

"Bettina."

"Bettina?"

"I adore her, godfather, I adore her."

"Oh, my poor boy!"

"Pardon me for speaking to you about these

things; but I tell you as I would have told my father; and besides—I never have had the opportunity of speaking of it, and it has oppressed me. Yes, it is a madness which by degrees has taken possession of me, in spite of myself, for you may very well understand. Why, it is here, at this very place, that I began to love her. You know when she came here with her sister—the little thousand-franc rolls—her hair that came down—and that evening the month of Mary! Then I saw her as she is by nature, freely, familiarly, and you talked to me ceaselessly about her, you praised her kindness. How many times have you told me that there was nobody better in the world than her!"

"And I think it still, and nobody knows it better than I do, for I am the only one that has seen her with the poor. If you only knew how brave and tender she is during our morning rounds. Neither misery nor wretchedness repels. But I am wrong to tell you this!"

"No! no! I shall see her no more, but I like you to speak of her."

"Jean, you never will meet a better and higher-minded woman. To such a point, that one day she had driven me in an open carriage which was full of toys—which she was taking to

a little sick girl—and when she gave them to her she spoke so kindly to her, that I thought of you and said to myself—I remember it now—'Ah, if she were poor!'"

"Ah, if she were poor! But she is not."

"That is true, my poor boy; we cannot help it. If it makes you miserable to see her, to live near her, go, go. And yet, Jean, do you know what I think? I have seen Miss Bettina a good deal since she came to Longueval. Well! when I come to think of it—I did not wonder at it at first, it seemed to me only natural that people should interest themselves in you—but she talked always of you, yes, always."

"Of me?"

"Yes, and of your father and your mother. She was anxious to know what sort of life you led; she asked me to explain to her what the existence of a true soldier was, the life of a soldier who likes his profession and conscientiously does his duty. How strange! Since you have told me about it, a thousand little things crowd themselves upon me. For instance, she returned from Havre yesterday at three o'clock. Why! one hour after her arrival she was here, and she spoke of you immediately! She asked me if you had written, if you had been well—

when you would arrive, and whether the regiment would pass through the village."

"It is useless, godfather, to recall all these memories."

"No, it is not useless. She seemed so glad, so happy even that she should see you again. She is now looking forward to the dinner this evening as a treat. She wishes to introduce you to her brother-in-law, who has arrived. There is nobody at the Château just now, not a single visitor. She insisted on this point—and I remember her last phrase—she was on the threshold, 'There will only be,' said she, 'five of us; you and M. Jean, my sister, my brother-in-law, and myself,' then she added laughingly, 'Quite a family party!' With these words she rushed away. Quite a family party! Do you know what I think, Jean, do you?"

"You must not think so, godfather, indeed you must not."

"Jean, I think she loves you."

"And I think so too."

"You too?"

"When I left her twenty days ago, she was so agitated, so troubled. She saw me depressed and wretched. She would not let me go. It was at the door of the Château. I was

obliged to hurry away—yes, hurry away—my heart should have burst out. After having walked a few steps, I stopped and turned round. She could no longer see me. I was quite in the darkness. But I could see her! She remained there motionless, with bare arms and shoulders, in the rain, gazing in the direction in which I had gone. I may be a fool to think that. It might only have been a feeling of pity. But, no, it was something more than pity, for do you know what she did the next day? She came in the most horrible weather to see me pass along the road with the regiment—and then the way she bade me farewell. Ah, godfather, my dear godfather!"

"But then," said the poor Curé, completely bewildered, and at a loss to know what to say, "but then—I cannot understand. If she loves you, Jean, and if you love her——"

"This is above all the reason why I must go. If it were only I! If I were sure she had not perceived my love, sure she had not been moved by it, I would remain—only for the delight of seeing her, and I would love her hopelessly only for the delight of loving her. But she has understood all, and, far from discouraging me—that is what compels me to go."

"No, decidedly, I cannot make it out. I know well, my dear boy, we are speaking of matters in which I am not well up, but you are both good, young, and charming. You love her, she loves you, and you will not——"

"What about her money, godfather? What about her money?"

"Never mind her money; that is nothing; it is not on account of her money you have loved her. It is rather in spite of her money. Your conscience, Jean, can be quite at ease about that—and that is sufficient."

"No, that is not sufficient. To have a good opinion of oneself is not sufficient; that opinion must be shared by others."

"Oh, Jean, among those who know you, who can doubt?"

"Who knows? And then there is another question besides the question of money, and a more serious one, too. I am not a suitable husband for her!"

"What other can be worthier than you?"

"The question is not to know what I might be worth, the question to be considered is what she is and what I am; what is to be her life and what must be mine! One day, Paul—you know he has rather a harsh way of saying

things—but that often makes the thought very expressive—we were talking of her. Paul did not suspect anything or he would not have spoken thus, for he is kind-hearted. Well, he said to me, 'What she wants is a husband entirely devoted to herself, who would have no other occupation than to make her life an everlasting fête—a husband, in short, who would give himself entirely in return for her money.' You know me. Such a husband I cannot, I must not be. I am a soldier, and I mean to remain one. Suppose the chances of my career sent me to a garrison in the Alps or in some obscure village in Algeria. How could I ask her to follow me? How could I condemn her to the existence of a soldier's wife, which, after all, is the life of the soldier himself? Just think of the life she leads now! of all that luxury, of all those pleasures!"

"Yes," said the Abbé, "that is more serious than the question of money."

"So serious that there can be no possible hesitation. During the last twenty days that I passed over there alone in the camp, I have thought of all that. I have thought of nothing else—and considering how I do love her, the reason must be very strong that shows me so

clearly my duty. I must go—far, very far—as far as possible. I shall be very unhappy, but I must not see her again. I must not."

Jean sank down on an arm-chair near the fireplace; there he remained motionless, crushed by his emotion. The old priest looked at him sadly.

"To see you so miserable, my poor boy; that such a grief should fall on you. It is too cruel, too unjust."

At that moment a light knock was heard at the door.

"All right, Jean," said the Curé, "I will say *I* cannot receive any one."

The Abbé went to the door, opened it, and drew back as before an unexpected apparition.

It was Bettina. Immediately she saw Jean, she went straight to him.

"Here you are," cried she. "Oh, how glad I am!"

He rose. She took both his hands, and, addressing the Curé, she said:

"Excuse me, M. le Curé, for going to him first. I saw you yesterday—and him I have not seen for twenty whole days, not since a certain night when he left our house sad and suffering."

She still held Jean's hands. He had neither power to move nor to utter a word.

"And now," Bettina continued, "do you feel any better? No, not yet—I can see—still depressed. Ah! I have been inspired to come. However, it embarrasses me a little—it embarrasses me very much to find you here. You will understand why when you know what I have to ask of your godfather." She released Jean's hands, and, turning towards the Abbé, said, "I have come, M. le Curé, to beg you to listen to my confession. Yes, my confession! But don't go away, M. Jean; I will make my confession publicly. I am quite willing to speak before you—and, now I think of it, it will be much better thus. Let us sit down. Shall we?"

She felt full of confidence and boldness. She was feverish, but with that fever which, on the field of battle, gives soldiers heroism and contempt of danger. The emotion that caused Bettina's heart to beat quicker than usual was a high and generous emotion. She said to herself, "I do wish to be loved. I do wish to love. I do wish to be happy. I do wish to make him happy. And since he cannot have the courage to speak, I must march alone, and bravely, to the conquest of our love, to the conquest of our happiness!"

From the first words, Bettina had gained over the Abbé and Jean a complete ascendency. They

let her say what she liked. They felt that the hour was supreme, that something decisive, irrevocable was about to happen, but what it was neither was able to foresee. They sat down with docility, almost automatically. They waited. They listened. Bettina alone retained her composure. In a clear and self-possessed voice she began :

" First of all, M. le Curé, to ease your mind, I must tell you that I am here with my sister and brother-in-law's consent. They know why I have come ; they know what I am going to do. They not only know, they approve of it. That is settled, is it not? Well, what brings me here is your letter, M. Jean ; that letter in which you tell my sister that you cannot dine with us tonight, and that you are absolutely obliged to leave here. This letter has upset all my plans. I had intended this evening—always with my sister and brother-in-law's consent—I had intended, after dinner, to take you into the park, M. Jean, to sit down with you on a bench. I was childish enough to choose the spot beforehand, a short while ago. Then I should have made a speech to you, a speech prepared and very much studied, almost learned by heart ; for since your departure I have thought of nothing else.

I repeated it to myself from morning till night. That is what I intended to do, and you may well imagine that your letter caused me much disappointment. I reflected a little, and I thought that if I delivered my little speech to your godfather it would be about the same as if I delivered it to yourself. So I have come, M. le Curé, to beg you to listen to me."

"I am listening, mademoiselle," stammered the Curé.

"I am rich, M. le Cure, very rich, and, to speak the truth, I like my money very much, yes, very much. To it I owe the luxuries with which I am surrounded, which luxuries I acknowledge—it is a confession—are not in the least disagreeable to me. My excuse is that I am very young. I may improve in that way with time, but that is not certain. I have another excuse; it is that, if I like money a little for the pleasure that it procures me, I like it more for the good it enables me to do around me. I like it selfishly, so to speak, for the joy of giving; but I think that my fortune is by no means ill-placed in my hands. Well, M. le Curé, in the same way that you have the care of souls, it seems that I have the care of money. I have always said to myself, 'I wish above all that my

husband should be worthy of sharing this large fortune; I wish to be certain that he will make good use of it with me while I am here, and after me if I must go from this world first.'

"I said something else; I said, 'I want to love the man who will be my husband.' And now, M. le Curé, I am coming to my confession. There is a man who, for the past two months, has done all he can to conceal from me that he loves me. Yet I don't doubt for one moment that he does love me! Jean, do you love me?"

"Yes," murmured Jean, in a faint voice, his eyes cast down like a criminal, "I do love you."

"I knew you did, but I wanted to hear it from your own lips! And now, Jean, I entreat you, don't utter a single word. Any word of yours would be useless, would only disturb me, would stop me from coming to the end and telling you what I meant to tell you. Promise me to sit still, without speaking. Will you promise?"

"I promise you."

Bettina began to lose a little of her assurance. Her voice quivered slightly. She continued, however, with a playfulness a trifle assumed.

"Of course, M. le Curé, I don't accuse you

for what has happened; yet all this is a little your fault."

"My fault?"

"Ah, don't speak either. Yes, I say your fault. I am sure that you have spoken highly of me to Jean—too highly. Were it not for that, he might not have thought of me. And, at the same time, you have spoken very highly of him to me—not too highly, no, no, but yet very, very highly. Then I trusted you so much that I began to look at him and to take more notice of him. I began to compare him with those who, during the last years, have proposed to me. It struck me that he was in every way absolutely superior to them all. Finally, it happened on a certain day or rather on a certain evening three weeks ago, the night before you left here, I discovered that I loved you, Jean! Yes, Jean, I love you! I entreat you, Jean, don't say a word—stay where you are—don't come near me. Before I came, I thought that I had gathered enough courage, but you see I have already lost my fine composure of a moment ago. However, I have some things to tell you—and the most important of all! Listen, Jean, do listen to me well! I won't have a hasty reply. I know that you love me. If you marry

me, I don't want it to be only out of love; I want your reason to approve of me likewise. During the fortnight before you left here, you took such good care to avoid me, to shrink from my conversation, that I have not been able to reveal myself to you as I really am. There may be in me certain qualities that you don't know. Jean, I know what you are, I know too what I should undertake in becoming your wife, and I should be to you not only a tender, a loving wife, but a firm and courageous one. I know your life thoroughly—I learned it from your godfather. I know why you have become a soldier. I know what duties, what sacrifices may be in store for you. Jean, I never should try to turn you from any of these duties and sacrifices, you may be sure of that. If I could bear you any ill-will, it would be, perhaps, for this thought—oh, you must have had it—that I should wish you to be entirely disengaged, that I should ask you to give up your career. Never, never, do you hear? Never!

"I should never ask such a thing of you. I know a young girl who did it when she married; she did wrong.

"I love you, and I love you such as you are. It is because you lead a different life from those

others who have wished to marry me that I wish to be your wife. I should love you less—perhaps I should not love you at all, though that would be very difficult—if you were beginning to lead such a life as those men I have rejected. When I can follow you, I shall follow you. Wherever your duty calls you, my place will be; wherever you are will be my happiness! And, if the day comes when you cannot take me with you, the day when you are compelled to go alone, well! on that day I promise you to be brave and not to make a coward of you. And now, M. le Curé, it is not to him, it is to you that I am speaking. I want you to answer. Not him. Tell me. If he loves me and feels I am worthy of him, would it be right to make me suffer because I happen to be rich? Tell me! Ought he not to be my husband?"

"Jean," said the old priest, gravely, "marry her; it is your duty, and it will be your happiness."

Jean approached Bettina, took her in his arms, and fervently kissed her upon her brow. Bettina disengaged herself gently, and addressing the old priest, she said, "Now, M. le Curé, I have something more to ask you. I wish—I wish——"

"You wish?"

"I pray you, M. le Curé, give me a kiss too."

The old priest kissed her paternally on both cheeks, then Bettina resumed.

"You often said, M. le Curé, that you look upon Jean as your own son. You will look upon me as your own daughter, will you not? You will have two children, that is all!"

. . . . . .

One month later, on the 12th of September, at mid-day, Bettina, dressed in a very plain wedding-dress, entered Longueval Church, while from behind the altar the Ninth Artillery band joyously sounded under the vaulted roof. Nancy Turner had craved the honour of playing the organ on that solemn occasion; for the poor, wretched harmonium had been replaced by an organ with resplendent pipes which stood in the gallery. It was Miss Percival's present to Abbé Constantin.

The old Curé performed mass. Jean and Bettina knelt down before him. He pronounced the Benediction and remained for a few moments there in prayer, his arms extended, calling down with his whole soul the blessing of Heaven upon his two children.

The organ then sounded the same *Rêverie*

de Chopin which Bettina had played the first time that she had entered the little village church, in which the happiness of her whole life was to be consecrated.

And this time it was Bettina who wept.

THE END OF ABBÉ CONSTANTIN

A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE

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A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE

In a simple and fairly telegraphic style he used to write every morning and evening in a diary a little programme and a brief account of his day. He had begun it at twenty, on the 3d of October, 1869, and this was the little note inscribed under that date:

I am appointed sub-lieutenant in the 21st chasseurs.

When the 31st of December came he would place in a drawer the diary of the dying year, and pass on to the diary of that which followed.

She, with more care and at greater length, in pretty volumes bound in blue morocco and securely locked, used to keep, when she was a young girl, a detailed journal of her life. She had begun it at sixteen, and her first entry, dated the 17th of May, 1876, was thus expressed:

To-day I put on my first long gown.

She was married on the 17th of August, 1879, and then she stopped the record. She wrote nothing more in the little blue morocco books;

but she had preserved and hidden mysteriously in the bottom of a secret drawer the volumes which related her life between the month of May, 1876, and the month of August, 1879; between her first long gown and her marriage.

He also had been married on the 17th of August, 1879, but he had not discontinued his daily entries, so that in his desk were thirteen little diaries in which his life was noted day by day, and very exactly, in spite of the dryness of the form. From time to time he would amuse himself by taking one of these diaries at random. He would open it and read fifteen or twenty pages, thus living again in the past and placing "formerly" face to face with "to-day." Now on the 19th of June, 1881, the young sub-lieutenant of 1869, become a captain and recommended for chef-d'escadron, was alone about ten o'clock in the evening, in his study, before his desk; and, with his head in his hands, was wondering whether it was in the spring of 1878 or that of 1879 that he had published in the *Bulletin of the Officers' Union* an article on the new organization of the transportation system in Austria-Hungary. It occurred to him that he would probably find in his diaries the date of the publication of the article.

He opened the drawer containing the diaries, and chance caused him to lay his hand upon the year 1879. He began to look through the little volume. He turned and turned the pages, but suddenly he stopped and read with a certain attention a passage which caused him to smile. He rose, moved away from his desk, went and sat down in a great arm-chair, and there continued to read. He was no longer thinking in the least of the organization of the transportation system of Austria-Hungary. Old memories, evidently, were awaking in his heart and calling faint smiles to his lips and a shade of tenderness to his eyes. Three or four times this cavalry captain was obliged to stop with the end of his finger a slight, a very slight beginning of a tear.

He was absorbed in this reading when one of the portières of his study opened gently, and a delicious blonde head appeared in the framework of old tapestry.

What was he doing there in that great easy-chair? Could he be asleep? He had pitilessly sent her away a half-hour before because he wished to work, and because when she was there she disturbed him, troubled him, and put into his head ideas which were not at all ideas of work.

Then, with infinite precautions, the little blonde, slender and lissome in the long folds of her white muslin morning-gown, slipped into the room, took three or four steps upon tip-toe, and bent to one side. He was not asleep; he was reading, and very attentively, for he had heard nothing, and had not moved. He was within his right. To read is to work.

Holding her breath, she continued her way towards the arm-chair, slowly, very slowly—and as she went she asked herself a question. She was still somewhat a child—one-and-twenty, and very much in love. This said in her excuse, here is the question which she was asking herself:

"Where shall I kiss him? On the brow, on the cheek, or anywhere, at a venture?"

She drew nearer. Already, with the ends of her fingers, she was almost touching the captain's hair, and was about to decide resolutely upon "anywhere, at a venture," when suddenly she became horribly pale. On the two open pages of the diary she had just read:

June 16th.
I love her!

June 17th.
I love her!!

A single exclamation mark after the first "I love her!" two after the second. It had increased between the 16th and the 17th.

She uttered a little cry, and said, all a-tremble: "What is that? What is it?"

She began to faint. He rose and supported her in his arms; but she, bursting into tears and giving away to a flood of words broken by sobs, cried:

"June 16th, I love her! June 17th, I love her! and to-day is the 19th of June! You love another woman! Oh, it is frightful! it is frightful!"

Then he, wiping away her tears with two kisses, said:

"Look, you little goose; look, I say!"

He opened the diary at the first page, which bore in great printed figures, "1879."

"Ah!" she cried, joyfully, amid a little remnant of sobs, "it was I! It was I!"

Then she added, innocently, imprudently:

"So you kept a journal, too?"

"How, I too? Then it seems that you——?"

She was obliged to own that if he had written "I love her" in little black morocco diaries, she had written the like in blue morocco journals. And as she said to her husband:

"Show me the diary, show it to me, that I may see whether there are three exclamation marks on the 18th and four on the 19th."

"We will have a fair exchange," he replied. "Go fetch your books and we will compare. We will see which of us has the more exclamation marks."

The temptation was too strong. She went for the year 1879, and returned with three books of very respectable size.

"Three volumes!" he cried.

"Yes, one for each three of the first nine months; and you have, for the whole year, only a horrid little note-book of no size at all."

"One can say a great many things in a few words. You will see. Come and sit here beside me; there is room for two on this great chair."

"Yes, by sitting in your lap. But that is impossible."

"Why?"

"Because there may be things in my books which you cannot see."

She held up her blue books, and he, holding up his diary, said:

"And in this too, perhaps. You are right. Let us sit just apart, opposite one another. We will read only what we wish to read."

"And we can skip."

"Certainly," said he; "begin."

"No, do you begin, to give me courage."

"Very well; but where shall I begin?"

"Well," she replied, "where I begin."

"No, I must begin somewhat before you; I must begin where Jupiter begins."

"You are quite right; see where Jupiter begins, then."

"Wait a moment—it must be during the first half of May. Yes, here it is—'Thursday, May 15th. Went to Cheri's to see Jupiter, dark bay horse seven years old. Remarks in catalogue: Excellent saddle horse, high action, leaps well, has been ridden by a lady. Is to be sold May 21st. Highly recommended by d'Estilly.' And two pages further on: 'Saturday, May 17th. Saw Jupiter. The horse seems very good. Will go as high as 2500 francs.' And finally, four pages further, 'Wednesday, May 21st.'"

"The day we met in the train. I recollect the date."

"Yes, you are right. 'Wednesday, May 21st. To the War Office. To my sister's. Bought Jupiter, 1900 francs. On the way home, in the train, enchanting young girl seated opposite me.'"

"Is that there? You are not making up a little for politeness' sake?"

"I am not making up at all."

"Let me see."

"Here, look."

"Yes, I see. Enchanting—it is there; enchanting."

"Now for yours. You must have something on that day."

"I should hope not! Do you suppose that I wrote, 'On the way home in the train enchanting young man seated opposite me'?"

"No, not 'enchanting young man,' but look all the same."

"It is only to ease my conscience. Let me see. 'Wednesday, May 21st. To the Louvre—to my aunt's—to the Salon.' There is nothing, I tell you. Ah, yes; I see something!"

"I was very sure of it. You had noticed me."

"Here is what there is: 'On the way home, in the train, a young man was seated opposite me. He looked at me all the way, all the whole way. Whenever I raised my eyes he would lower his; but when I lowered mine he would raise his again; and after Chatou I did not dare to look up at all, I was so conscious that he was

looking at me. I had an English novel in my bag; I took it and began to read, but in the evening I was obliged to go all over again what I thought I had read in the cars.'"

"That is not all. I think there is something else."

"Yes, but without the slightest interest."

"Never mind, read it. I read everything."

"Oh, you—you—I see how it will be! With you, it will always be little notes, short and dry; while with me there will be details and amplification. I will explain to you why. When Mlle. Guizard, my governess, left me, she said to me: 'My dear child, you do not write at all badly, but you must continue to work; scales are necessary for style just as for the piano. Make it a habit to write three or four pages every evening, on any subject you choose—about your day, about the visits you have received or returned, and the like.' And then I did what Mlle. Guizard recommended."

"Very good."

"No, I wish to explain myself distinctly upon this point because, I repeat, I know what will happen. In a few moments you will fancy that you see warmth of sentiment and outbursts of passion, where there are nothing but exercises

in French composition. I do not wish you to be mistaken."

"I shall not be mistaken; but what is there after, 'He looked at me all the time'?"

"Nothing at all about you. Here, listen: 'Can what grandmamma said the day before yesterday be true?—"It is extraordinary! This little Jeanne has suddenly become very pretty."' And then a long conversation between mamma and grandmamma; mamma reproached grandmamma for saying such things to me, for making me vain. There is nothing of interest, I tell you. Go on."

"I have nothing on the 22d."

"Nor I either."

"'May 23d. Jupiter came. Tried the horse on the terrace and in the forest. I think him excellent.'"

"And about me?"

"Nothing."

"Ah! that is rather humiliating, for I have something about you on the 23d. 'The young man who looked at me on the train the day before yesterday is a soldier. He passed a little while ago on horseback in uniform. He had three silver stripes upon his sleeve. I say that he passed, but he did more than that. What I

am going to write is absurd, but still, since it is for myself alone that I am writing—can he really have noticed me in the train? Can he have inquired about me? Can he have learned that I live here? Can he have wished to display his horsemanship before me? He remained at least an hour there on the terrace, between the Pavilion of Henry IV and the gate, putting his horse through his paces, making him pirouette, change foot, volte, and all the rest of it. It would be a very vulgar thing to attempt to fascinate me by such means.'"

"What an injustice! You see it there in my diary, 'Tried Jupiter.' I was trying Jupiter, and I discovered that he had received a very brilliant education. But no matter; go on."

"'This evening after dinner I said to Georges, who, in spite of his twelve years, still spends his time in playing with lead soldiers, and who is very expert in military matters—"Georges, what officer is it that has three silver stripes upon his sleeve?" "It is a captain." "Is it a fine thing to be a captain?" "That depends. It is a fine thing at five-and-twenty, but a poor one at fifty."

"'Five-and-twenty; he may be a little more than that, but not much. Grandmamma, who has sharp ears, had heard my conversation with

Georges, and remarked :—" Do you know what is going on ? Jeanne is asking Georges for information about the army." I became red as a peony. From this came a long discussion. Grandmamma declared that she had a liking for the army, and mamma cried that she never could make up her mind to give me to a gentleman who would drag me about from garrison to garrison. I wonder why I write all this nonsense in this book. Oh, yes, to obey Mlle. Guizard !' There, you see, it is written. It is your turn ; I have finished."

" On the 24th, two lines. ' Met in the forest the young girl whom I saw last Wednesday. She is certainly very pretty, and she does not ride badly.' "

" Is that all ? How concise it is ! It needs a short commentary."

" Here is the commentary, my love. You are right ; my notes are frightfully dry, but if I were not afraid of appearing to wish to say pretty things to you——"

" Do not be afraid of that ; there is no one here."

" I would tell you that all that is not written in the note-book is written here in my heart. That May morning, that meeting in the forest—to-

day, after the lapse of two years, I recollect it all, and in its smallest details. We had manœuvred from five to seven o'clock on the plain of Loges in a horrible dust. I marched my squadron back to the quarters, changed my horse, and set out again on Jupiter."

"Dear Jupiter!"

"A quarter of an hour later I was galloping up a long, gentle slope near Le Val. I saw a little troop coming, you on Jenny, Georges on his roan pony, and old Louis behind on a tall gray horse. You see I recollect even the colour of the horses. Suddenly, at fifty yards from you, I was fairly dazzled. I recognised you. Sharply, roughly, I brought poor Jupiter to a walk. The little troop passed near me. I can see you now with your gray habit, your black hat, and the blonde locks curling beneath your veil. And as you passed, I said to myself:—'No, really, there is nothing in the world more charming than this young girl.' And what did you say to yourself?"

"What did I say? I do not recollect, but this is what I wrote."

And in a voice which trembled somewhat, for she had been greatly touched by the short commentary, Jeanne read as follows:

"'I met him this morning near Le Val. He was coming on at a gallop, and suddenly, when he recognised me, he stopped his horse. Yes, when he recognised me. I saw the movement distinctly. I know what it is to stop a horse going at a gallop. One warns him. Well, he stopped his horse without preparation, brutally, all at once, almost instantly. He passed quite close to me. I did not dare to look at him, but I was conscious that he was looking at me. He was not ten paces from us when that stupid little Georges said to me, "Oh, Jeanne, did you see him? How funny he was with all that dust! He looked like a pierrot. He is a captain in the 21st. The number 21 was on the collar of his uniform."

"'I was furious at Georges. If only he did not hear!'"

"I did hear. I recollect now."

"Come, read on. It is your turn."

"'Sunday, May 25th. Saw my unknown again; she lives in one of the houses on the terrace. I was driving past; she was at the window; she saw me, and it seemed to me that it was because she saw me that she left the window suddenly, very suddenly. Good Heavens, how charming she is!'"

'Come, that is a shade less dry than it was a while ago. There is an improvement. You put in verbs. You are beginning to write."

"That is perhaps because I was beginning to be in love. It is your turn."

"'May 25th. I was at the window; I saw coming a pretty little English cart, all glittering in the sunlight, and drawn by a love of a pony, as black as ink; on the seat was a tiny groom in irreproachable livery, and beside the groom was he, the captain. I ought to have remained quietly at the window, but I could not. I said to myself, "I shall look at him, and he will perceive that I am looking at him." I was frightened; I fled to the other end of the room. Grandmamma said, "What is the matter with you, Jeanne?" "Nothing at all, grandmamma." Georges, who was with me at the window, cried out—"Oh, Jeanne, I think that the captain who has just passed is the pierrot of yesterday morning!"'"

"I was the pierrot?"

"You were the pierrot. On the 26th of May I have nothing, absolutely nothing. Oh, you can read! There is nothing about you. 'Tried on my pink gown. It fitted well, but there were not enough little tucks. I had some added;' and

so on. I was thinking of nothing but my new gown. You see that I was not so much absorbed."

"Well, the 26th was a great day for me; it was the day when Picot distinguished himself. I have only two lines here, but they are eloquent. 'Gave twenty francs to Picot. He is a profound diplomatist.'"

"This is the place, if ever, for a new commentary."

"Willingly. That morning at breakfast at mess I had said to Dubrisay, who is always wandering on horseback in the forest, 'Do you not know a young girl who rides with a little fellow of twelve and an old servant?' 'Wait a moment; the young girl rides a black mare.' 'And the old servant, a gray horse,' said another of these gentlemen. 'And the boy, a roan pony,' added a third. Thereupon there was a great discussion over the merits of the horses. The roan pony appeared excellent, and the black mare somewhat worn out."

"It was true, happily!"

"Oh, yes, happily! Then I replied, 'I am not talking about the horses, but about the young girl.' And all three replied that they never looked at anything but the horses. Much progress I had

made! I returned to my quarters. About three o'clock I saw Picot, my orderly, lounging in the court. I called to him from the window. Picot is a Parisian, and very sharp. I said to him, 'Picot, try to find out adroitly who are the people who live in such and such a house upon the terrace. The entrance is in the Rue des Arcades.' 'Very good, captain.' 'But adroitly, you understand.' 'Yes, captain.' 'If you find out anything, you can tell it to me to-morrow morning at quarters.'"

"You were not very impatient. You might have told him to come back at once."

"That is precisely what he did. An hour afterward he returned triumphant. And then Picot delivered so extraordinary a discourse that I amused myself by transcribing it as exactly as possible in the little diary."

"'I amused myself'! What a cowardly evasion! Tell the truth! Confess that it was not disagreeable to you to write things in which I was in question, and then perhaps I will confess myself that it was not disagreeable to me to write things in which you——"

"Well, I confess it."

"And I too. Now read on."

"'Picot returned and said to me, "Captain, I know everything. Only, I beg of you, when

once I have begun, do not interrupt me with questions, because that confuses me. I have been repeating my lesson all the way back that I might not forget it. The house was rented three weeks ago by Parisians. The head of the family is a M. Lablinière, a manufacturer; he makes steam-engines, telegraphs, and the like. He is there with his mother-in-law, his wife, and his two children: a young girl (nineteen years old) and a boy (twelve years old). Wait a moment: I know the names of the children—Jeanne and Georges. They are rich, very rich. Five horses in the stable, three carriages, four men servants, a cook, three maids: Julie, Adelai—but I don't suppose that you care for the names of the maids, captain. Their address in Paris is 28 Boulevard Haussmann. How did I learn all that? By talking to the porter. No, no! do not interrupt me; it would upset me. I see what disturbs you, captain. You think that I have been stupid, that I told him I was sent by you. Not at all. You are asking yourself, 'How did that imbecile Picot manage to begin the conversation?' Ah! that was not very difficult, captain. There was no great merit in it. The porter was before his door. I came up to him slowly, with the air of a soldier who is

lounging about aimlessly, and when I was just opposite him I went like this: 'Whew! how hot it is!' He replied: 'Oh! yes, it is hot.' I continued: 'Not quite so hot as yesterday, however,' He replied: 'No, because there is a little breeze.'

"'"That started it; the ice was broken; we began to chat. Just as I was beginning to manœuvre to come to the great question, I saw coming down the steps at the end of the courtyard a devilish pretty young lady—I beg pardon, captain—with a great bit of bread in her hand. I said to the porter, 'Is that your mistress?' He replied: 'No; it is the daughter of the tenant, a gentleman from Paris.'

"'"Then he told me all that I have just detailed to you. There was no merit in it, I repeat, captain. He went on of his own accord, did this porter. He was still going on when I saw the young lady crossing the courtyard without her bit of bread. The porter said to me: 'There she is again, the daughter of the gentleman from Paris. Every day she goes and gives bread to her horse in the stable.'

"'"Meanwhile the young lady was going back up the steps, but very slowly and looking at me. She seemed astonished at seeing me there;

she appeared to be saying to herself: 'What in the world is that chasseur doing here?' She went back into the house. During this time the porter was praising this young lady—oh, how he praised her!—because she was so sweet, so good, and not only to the horses but to people. For instance, when they arrived three weeks ago the porter's little girl was ill. Well, would you believe it, this young lady—but, I beg your pardon, captain; perhaps all these details do not interest you. They do interest you? Very good, then I will go on. I was saying to you that she came to see this porter's little girl every day, and sent her soup and good things to eat; she brought her with her own hands playthings and bon-bons; she would sometimes stay a quarter of an hour at a time in the lodge telling this child stories!

"'"The porter was telling me all this when there came a maid—a pretty woman enough, captain, by your leave. She said to the porter: 'Is there not a letter for mademoiselle?' 'Oh, no; you know very well that I send up the letters for mademoiselle at once.' But I said to myself: 'Perhaps one might learn something from the maid.' Then I began again: 'It is warm, mademoiselle.' 'Oh, yes.' I continued: 'Not quite so warm as yesterday.'

"'"It succeeded just as well as with the porter, and the conversation began all over again. The maid asked me if I did not know a certain Camus, a brigadier in the 10th hussars. We were chatting away when suddenly she cried: 'Oh, I must go! mademoiselle is waiting for me.' 'And will your mistress be angry, will she scold you?' 'My mistress be angry, scold me? No, indeed! There is nobody in the world better than mademoiselle.'"'"

"That is all?"

"Yes, it is all."

"So you set spies upon me."

"Precisely; but your story of the 26th?"

"Here it is. 'Tuesday, May 27th. Yesterday, in the afternoon, I went to take some bread to Nelly. As I went down the steps I saw a soldier talking to the porter. I remained in the stable five minutes; when I came out I looked; the soldier was still there. I returned to my room and found Julie there. Oh, when curiosity takes possession of one, it is horrible! I said to Julie, "I expect a letter from Paris; go and see if it is not at the porter's lodge." She went. I waited. Julie did not return. I went into my dressing-room, which opens on the court. I saw Julie; she was talking to this soldier. At last

she returned. "There was no letter, mademoiselle." "You were gone very long." "Oh, no, mademoiselle." "Yes, I saw you; you were talking to a hussar." "A hussar! oh, no, mademoiselle." "But I saw you." "I was not talking to a hussar, mademoiselle—it was a chasseur; there is a difference in the uniform, Hussars have white braid and chasseurs black; hussars have a collar like the dolman and chasseurs have a red collar." "How do you know all that, Julie?" "I have a cousin in the hussars, mademoiselle; here at Saint Germain there are no hussars, there are only chasseurs; two regiments, the 21st and 22d, which are brigaded together. The soldier who was there was a chasseur of the 21st."

"'The twenty-first! His regiment! My military conversation with Julie was destined to have deplorable results. About six o'clock we went with mamma to take a turn on foot upon the terrace. We met two officers of chasseurs. Mamma said to me, "Those hussars have pretty horses."

"'I replied thoughtlessly, "Those are not hussars, mamma, they are chasseurs; hussars have white braid and chasseurs black; hussars have a collar like the dol——"

"'I did not finish. I looked at mamma; she was stupefied. "How do you know all that?" "Good Heavens! mamma, from Julie. She has a cousin in the hussars. So one day, when she was dressing my hair——"

"'"Singular subject of conversation," said mamma.

"'We said nothing more. But all was not over. Papa returned from Paris; we went to dinner, and papa told us that he had met an officer in the train. Suppose it was he! A colonel—it was not he! Papa spent a month with this colonel at Cauterets last year. They played whist together. They renewed their acquaintance in the train. Papa has invited him to dinner next week, for Wednesday, June 4th. I said to papa: "Is this colonel's regiment at Saint Germain?" "Yes, his regiment is here." "Is it the 21st or the 22d?" "Are there two regiments here?" "Yes, papa, the 21st and the 22d; they are brigaded together."

"'And there was papa still more amazed than mamma. "But who told you all that?" "Good Heavens! it was Julie; she has a cousin in the hussars." "I cannot understand it at all," said mamma; "for some time Jeanne has talked of nothing but chasseurs and hussars." "Oh!" said

grandmamma, "perhaps she has remarked some handsome officer."

"'I became scarlet. I replied impatiently, almost crossly. I am beginning to be seriously angry with this gentleman whom I do not know, whom I never shall know. Yes, I am angry with him for having broken in upon my life. Why did he look at me in the train? Why did he come to do the *haute école* under my windows? Why did he bring his horse to a walk the other day when he saw me? If I meet him, as soon as I recognise him I will set off at a gallop, at full gallop. Alas! a full gallop does not suit my poor Nelly very well now; she is growing old. And so papa is going to give me another horse for my birthday.

"'I should like to know whether it is his colonel who is to dine here on Wednesday, June 4th.'"

This was the last phrase in the entry under May 27th. Then she turned over a dozen pages of her journal.

"From May 28th to June 3d there is absolutely nothing about you."

"Nor anything about you in this," he replied. "That is because we had the unhappiness not to see one another during that week. I was not at

Saint Germain. We had gone off, some twenty officers of the two regiments with the general and the colonels, for the manœuvres between Vernon and Rouen. I had taken Jupiter, and my little notes during this week away from home are full of very complimentary remarks about my new horse: 'Jupiter irreproachable; strong, spirited, and gentle.' 'Yesterday the colonel rode Jupiter and thought him perfect,' etc., etc. On June 3d, at eight o'clock in the evening, we returned to Saint Germain, and on the 4th I had not forgotten you; see! look! There: 'Shall I see the little blonde of the terrace again?'"

"And here is my fourth of June; 'I know his name. We had the colonel at dinner this evening. He came at seven o'clock. My eyes went straight to the collar of his uniform and I saw the number 21. So it was really his colonel. During dinner the conversation was perfectly uninteresting, but afterward, as I was pouring the coffee, papa said: "Colonel, you can do me a service, perhaps. I want to give a horse to this young person, and if you know of a good animal, very gentle——"

"'I began to protest. "Not too gentle, colonel; I ride very well." (And it is true, I do ride very well.) "I will see," replied the colonel;

"I will inquire. Ah! one of the officers of my regiment has a horse which would suit you admirably, mademoiselle; I rode him the other day. He is perfect." "If he would let me have him," said papa, "with a good profit." "Oh! this officer would be altogether indifferent to a good profit; he is rich, very rich. It is a captain, M. de Léonelle." "A captain and rich?" cried Georges; "perhaps it is the officer whom we saw the other day in an English cart with a black pony." "That is he, precisely." "Oh! my sister and I know him well; we have met him several times——"

"'This time I felt my cheeks in a flame, literally in a flame. The colonel looked at me. I must have been crimson. He surely perceived it. He left us at ten o'clock, and as he went he said to me: "I will speak to M. de Léonelle tomorrow morning, but I greatly fear that I shall not succeed. He adores his horse."

"'That is how matters stand. Am I going to buy his horse? Papa has given me a credit of three thousand francs.'"

"Now we come to the decisive day, the scene in the photographer's, at the fête."

"And your first visit. Begin."

The distance between them had diminished.

She had come and sat down, not upon his knee, but upon a little stool at his feet; and while he was reading she would lean her head lovingly against his knees, so that, profiting by the advantages of the ground—he controlled the situation—the captain began to kiss Jeanne with a certain vivacity. She disengaged herself, but not at once.

"Come, stop," said she; "stop and begin."

He began.

"'Thursday, June 5th. This morning after the manœuvres we were returning at a walk along the Avenue de Loges. The adjutant came to call me to the colonel. I joined him at the head of the column. "Captain," said he, "you do not happen to wish to sell your new horse?" "Certainly not, colonel." "Not even with a good profit?" "Not even with a good profit." "It was for a very pretty person, and one who knows you." "Who knows me, colonel?" "Yes; she has met you several times, and she has seen you on the terrace; at any rate she appeared to know you, and I even thought I observed that when I pronounced your name yesterday she blushed; blushed in a very perceptible manner." "And who is it, colonel?" "It is the daughter of an engineer, a M. Lablinière." "A blonde,

colonel?" "Yes, a blonde." "Who lives in a house upon the terrace?" "Precisely; you see that you know her." "Only by sight, colonel." "Well, see whether you are willing to give up your horse to this pretty blonde. Au revoir, captain."

"'Sell Jupiter? To any one else, never! To her? I hesitate. She is so pretty! So she blushed when she heard my name? The colonel must have dreamed. Why should she have blushed? Why?

"'My sister Louise arrived at eleven o'clock. She came to invite herself to breakfast with her children. It was the day of the fête at Saint Germain, and after breakfast the children asked to go and see the booths. "Uncle, if there is a photographer will you have our pictures taken?" I agreed to this.

"'Sure enough, there was a photographer. We went into his little house. She was there with her brother, her mother, and a great black poodle. The brother was on his knees upon the ground beside the black poodle, trying to persuade him to remain quiet. "Come, Bob, do not move, we want to have your picture taken."

"'But Bob paid no attention to the prayers of the little boy, who, losing courage, said:

"Speak to him, Jeanne; speak to him; nobody but you can make him mind. And speak to him in English; he understands English a great deal better than French." "No, Georges, you are absurd." "Jeanne, dear Jeanne."

"'She yielded; and, looking at M. Bob very severely, said: "Now, Bob, Master Bob, be obedient! Look at me, so! Now be still! Hush! Still!"

"'She certainly can make the black poodle mind. He remained motionless. Her voice is charming. And her face! I gazed at it there at my ease in the full light. She is a marvel of grace and youth.'"

"Wait a moment, let me see."

"Why?"

"I still believe in the little embellishments."

"You are wrong; look!"

"Yes, I see; it is there; 'marvel of grace and youth.' Very well; go on."

"'She shall have Jupiter! As she left she said to my sister (it seemed to me that there was a trace of emotion in her voice), "I beg your pardon, madame, for having made you wait." I ought to have found something to say; but no, I could think of nothing. I was absurd. I bowed. She made me a slight inclination of the

head. She went out of the photographer's house. "What an enchanting girl!" said my sister. "Ah, yes! indeed."

"'And then I was off. I told my sister her name and where she lives. Her father is an engineer of the highest merit, etc., etc. I felt an imperative need of talking about her. My sister was amazed. "But you are in love!" "In love! no." "Yes, you are in love. I must inquire about them. She will make me a very pretty sister-in-law."

"'I took Louise back to the train. No, I was not in love. But she should have Jupiter! Only one thing made me anxious. Yes, Cheri's catalogue certainly said—Has been ridden by a lady. But it would not do to trust to the statements in a catalogue. Poor, dear child! Suppose an accident were to happen to her! I had a side-saddle at my quarters. My sister sometimes came to ride with me. I said to Picot: "Put the side-saddle on Jupiter and take him to the riding-school. Take along a sheet."

"'A quarter of an hour afterward I was making Picot ride Jupiter on a side-saddle; I had wrapped his legs in the sheet to represent the skirt of the habit. Jupiter set off at a gallop. "Ah, captain, he understands it perfect-

ly," cried Picot; "he has been ridden by a lady."

"'I wished to try it myself. I mounted Jupiter in my turn like a lady, with my knees wound in the sheet. I trotted Jupiter and galloped him, and while I was trotting and galloping, I said to myself: When I think that if I am here in this ridiculous position and bedizenment it is because I met in a train two weeks ago a little blonde who was reading an English novel!

"'Well, evidently, Jupiter could be ridden by a lady. She should have Jupiter! Yes, but how should I give him to her? It would have been the correct thing to place the horse at the disposal of my colonel. No, I resolved to go at once to her house myself. I set out. Picot followed me, leading Jupiter. We arrived; we entered the courtyard. I looked at Picot; he had an amused look; he was saying to himself: "Ah, ha! that is why the captain sent me to make inquiries."

"'I rang. "M. Lablinière?" "He is at Paris." "Mme. Lablinière?" "She is here." "Send up my card. Say that I have come about a horse."

"'The servant went to announce me. Suppose she were not to be there! I went in. She

was there! with her mother, her grandmother, her little brother, and her black poodle. I do not know what happened after that. I must have been absurd. I recollect distinctly that something was said about a pelham and a sliding martingale. I believe I told her that the horse was named Jupiter; and I left, begging her to keep Jupiter and to try him for a week or a fortnight. Of course it was also necessary to speak of the price. At this the words burned my lips. And yet I could not make her a present of Jupiter. I shall have to take her money. We went down into the court, and there, standing beside Jupiter, we had another conversation, as absurd, as silly, as the conversation in the drawing-room. I was dying to say to this charming creature: "You are an angel and I adore you." And I did say to her, "The horse must have twelve quarts of oats," etc., etc. I perpetrated the most astonishing platitudes. I said to her, I recollect now, that the horse was built for a light weight and that he would be happier with her than with me. I must have made a disastrous impression upon her with such remarks. Finally I left with Picot; and my head was turned so topsy-turvy that I talked to Picot all the way home for the sake of speaking about her. And it stirred my heart

pleasantly when Picot said to me: "The pretty blonde had a curious way of looking at me. I think that she recognised me. She took a good look at me the day I went to pump the porter. It was the pretty blonde, captain, who was so good to the little sick girl." ' "

"Good Picot! He really had something to do with bringing about our marriage."

"Yes, that is true; he was the first to give me a very good account of you."

"And I had no account of you at all, yet I was beginning to love you without any account. Listen, you shall judge."

" 'Thursday, June 5th. Events are crowding upon each other fast; good Heavens! how will it all end? I have his horse. He is named Jupiter. He is there in the stable, between Nelly and Georges' pony. Let me try to put a little order into my poor head. How many things have happened to-day! After breakfast Georges said to me: "Little sister, you know that we are to go to-day to the photographer's at the fête to have Bob's picture taken." "But you can go with mamma without me." "No; if you are not there Bob will not keep quiet."

" 'I yielded; we set out and we came to the photographer's. Just as Bob was beginning to

pose, I saw enter — whom? Him! and not alone, but with a lady, quite young and charming. Who is this lady? But here are two children. They call him uncle. It is his sister. Georges could not make Bob behave; then I was obliged to play a ridiculous scene there before his eyes. I must have seemed to him a little idiot. I talked to Bob in English. I looked as though I was exhibiting a trained dog. I hurried away, all red with shame and confusion. I returned to the house, heart-broken, furious. I shut myself up in my room. Still, at five o'clock, I had to go down for tea.

"'I went down. I had hardly come in when Pierre brought up a card. "What is it?" said mamma. "Madame, it is an officer, a captain of chasseurs." "A captain of chasseurs! I do not know any captain of chasseurs! I come to the country to be quiet, and the house is overrun with soldiers! A colonel yesterday, a captain to-day! To-morrow we shall have the whole regiment! What does this captain want?" "Madame, he told me that he had come about a horse." "Look at the card, Jeanne; but what is the matter with you? How red you are! You must have a rush of blood to the head." "No, mamma." "Well, look and read." I took

the card and read, "Count Roger de Léonelle, captain in the 21st chasseurs." Count! he is a count! That is all he needed! "Léonelle," cried Georges, "why, that is the officer about Jeanne's horse." "True," said mamma, "the colonel did mention that name yesterday. And your father is not here! Well; we must receive the gentleman. Show him up, Pierre. Only, Jeanne, you will have to talk to him, for you know I do not understand anything about horses."

"'The door opened. It was he! He entered, he bowed, and mamma, after a phrase which was sufficiently amiable, but which might have been more so, said to me: "Jeanne, it is about your horse, so ask the count——"

"'So there we were left to begin the conversation. All the weight of it fell upon me. He was charming in his grace, tact, and simplicity. And I was stupid, positively stupid. I felt dull, crushed, imbecile. I will try to recollect the terms of this conversation which must have given him so deplorable an idea of me. We were there, seated a couple of paces apart, I, happily, with my back to the light. "My colonel spoke to me this morning, mademoiselle, and told me that you were looking for a horse." "Ah,

yes, monsieur; papa is giving me one for my birthday."

"'How stupid that was! What need had I to tell him that? But words would not come to me; and then, in my embarrassment, I said anything that occurred to my mind. He went on. "I can place at your disposal a horse which will, I think, suit you perfectly." "I thank you, monsieur, but your colonel said yesterday that you were very fond of your horse, and I should not like——" "Oh! really, mademoiselle, he is an excellent horse, and if that were not so I should not allow myself to offer him to you; but he is somewhat slender for me; a light weight will suit him better."

"'He was not telling the truth, for the colonel has ridden the horse and thought him excellent. And the colonel is not a light weight! He is enormous!!!

"'"A light weight will suit him better"! What a pretty thing, and said in such a well-bred and elegant fashion! One must carefully examine the hidden sense of this phrase. It means: You are delicate and light. You are a feather, you are a bird! He added: "Our work is sometimes very hard, and the horse will be happier with you."

"'Happier with you!!! He pronounced this phrase with a kind of softness, almost tenderness. It was a roundabout way of saying to me: "One cannot help being happy with you. Every one must be happy with you, even a horse!"

"'Can anything be imagined more ingenious, more delicate!'"

And Jeanne, suddenly breaking off, said: "Then you were not conscious of the pretty things you said to me?"

"No."

"Did you think them, at least?"

"Yes."

"That is the essential point. I will go on.

"'And I, to thank him, replied coldly: "Well, monsieur, I accept; when can I try the horse?" "Oh! I have brought him; he is here, mademoiselle. I will leave him with you. You can keep him to try a week, two weeks, as long as you like; one can never try a horse too thoroughly."

"'"Oh! you are too kind, monsieur; I will ride the horse to-morrow and papa will take you the answer at once." "No, mademoiselle, I beg of you. Keep the horse at least two or three days before you decide. I shall not need him in

the least." "Very well, as you please, monsieur; I am very grateful to you."

"'He rose, bowed, and was about to go out, when suddenly mamma said: "But Jeanne, you are forgetting a very important thing, the price of the horse."

"'Oh! I love mamma, I love her dearly; I love her with all my heart; but really, then, for a quarter of a second, not longer, I detested her! And yet mamma was right! Perhaps the horse was worth four or five thousand francs, and then my credit would not have permitted me. But to have to discuss directly with him this wretched, this vile question of money! It filled me with disgust.

"'I began to say: "It is true, monsieur. There is the question of price."

"'He happily came to my assistance.—"Oh! mademoiselle, the horse is not costly."—"You see, papa gives me only three thousand francs."—"Three thousand francs, mademoiselle! The horse is not worth three thousand francs. I only paid nineteen hundred francs for him, and when one gets rid of a horse one is always prepared to lose something on it."

"'Ah! it was then that I said to myself: "But he loves me! he loves me!! He wishes to

sell me at a loss this horse which he adores for the mere pleasure of selling it to me."

"'And I replied in my embarrassment: "Oh! really; you must have some little profit."—"I shall have a very great one, mademoiselle, if I have the happiness to oblige you. If the horse only suits you, I assure you that your father and I will easily agree about the price."

"'With this, a circular bow to grandmamma, mamma, me, Georges, Bob, everybody. He was about to leave, but he stopped on the threshold. He evidently found it hard to go.'"

"Yes, that is true."

"'He said to me that he would like to give some explanation to our coachman as to the manner of bridling the horse and the bit which suited him best. Then grandmamma—grandmamma behaved charmingly! But then grandmamma is not like mamma, she does not detest soldiers. So grandmamma was charming. She said: "Let us go down with the count, Jeanne; we will see the horse. Louis must be in the courtyard."

"'We went down, grandmamma, Georges, Bob, he, and I. The horse was there, held by a chasseur; and on the back of the horse I saw a side-saddle. The captain perceived my astonish-

ment.—"I have a side-saddle," he said, "for my sister, who sometimes comes to ride at Saint Germain, and just now, as I would not for anything in the world have exposed you to an accident, I had the horse taken to the riding-school, and I had my orderly ride him woman fashion."

"'I looked at the orderly; it was the chasseur I saw the other day, the chasseur who was talking to the porter. He knew me and I knew him. I became scarlet and the captain also blushed a little. I think he must have understood that the soldier and I recognised one another.

"'But this was nothing. The orderly spoke up, and said: "But my captain also rode the horse on the side-saddle, with the sheet arranged like the skirt of a habit. He wished to make sure for himself."

"'Then the captain became so red and I so pale that the orderly stopped, being afraid of having said something stupid. Moved almost to tears, I stammered: "Ah! how good you are, monsieur, how good you are!" He for his part repeated: "It was very natural, mademoiselle, it was very natural."

"'And grandmamma, who was very acute,

looked at me with her little eyes, which are at the same time very gentle and very piercing.

"'Louis came up, fortunately. He had not been in the courtyard. Georges had gone to find him. Then, before Louis, we had another little scrap of conversation. I do not know very well what was said then. He explained to us that the horse needed a very easy bit. I interrupted to say: "A pelham?" He replied: "No, not a pelham, a very light bit." He advised a simple or a sliding martingale, I do not recollect which. Finally, he carried his kindness to the point of giving suggestions as to the feed of the horse, so much of oats, of straw, of hay. After which he bowed to us and was about to go. I took a step towards him. He stopped. I wished to say something amiable and pleasant to him, but my emotion choked me and the words would not come. He waited and repeated: "Mademoiselle, mademoiselle." It was an intolerable situation. I had to speak at any cost. I could think of nothing but this: "I beg your pardon, monsieur, but what is the horse's name?" —"Jupiter, mademoiselle."—"Thank you, monsieur."—"Mademoiselle."

"'And he went off with the chasseur, who carried the side-saddle upon his shoulders. This

soldier is named Picot. Georges went into the stable with Louis. I remained alone with grandmamma, who said to me: "Jeanette, come and take a little turn in the garden."

"'There, upon a bank, grandmamma questioned me. I told her everything—everything, that is to say nothing, for there is nothing, and yet that nothing is something. Grandmamma said to me: "Little goose! little goose! do not go and take it into your head."—"I am not taking anything into my head, grandmamma; I know very well that it is all chance, yes, chance. But, I beg you, not a word to mamma; she would laugh at me, and then mamma is not like you; she is not fond of soldiers."—"What? So I?"—"Yes, grandmamma, you do like them, and I have several times said to myself: 'I do not know, but it seems to me that it would not be disagreeable to grandmamma if I were to happen to marry a soldier.'"

"'We went in again.—"Here you are at last," said mamma. "But explain to me what is going on. It appears that the courtyard was full of soldiers."—"Not at all, mamma, there was only this gentleman and his orderly."—"His orderly! Now you have come to speak the language of barracks."—"Mamma, it is a word which I just

heard."—"Well, this gentleman appears perfectly well-bred, and besides, you did not perhaps notice when you read his card—see, he is a count."—"A count?"—"Yes, look."—"No, I had not observed it."

"'Could any one fib more brazenly? Mamma was very much milder. My poor dear mother is excellent, but she has one little weakness. If I were to become a marquise or a countess she would be enchanted. I do not attach great importance to these things. Certainly it would not make me love some one whom I did not love. But, after all, it would not prevent my loving some one whom I might love.'"

"You have finished?"

"Yes, and it is enough, I think. It is your turn now."

"'Friday, June 6th. I must show discretion. I will not go into the forest or upon the terrace. I will wait.'"

"'Friday, June 6th. I rode Jupiter this morning, and I think that I did not ride him at all badly. He is a marvel of marvels! Grandmamma was still asleep when I started; when I returned I went to her room to say good-morning to her. She was writing. She had not heard

me open the door. Then, wishing to surprise her, I crept up behind her.'"

"It is a habit of yours, it appears."

"'Grandmamma was writing a letter which began with these words: "My dear General." I saw only that. Grandmamma immediately hid her letter. I recollect that grandmamma knows a general who occupies a fine position in the War Office. Why did grandmamma write to him this morning? And, above all, why did she hide her letter? After dinner, the affair of the horse was spoken of; papa would not leave to-morrow until the noon train. During the morning he would go to see M. de Léonelle.

"'The door opened. It was the colonel, and naturally they spoke of the horse and the visit set for the next morning; papa said that it discommoded him somewhat not to leave until noon, on account of his business.—"Do not trouble yourself," said the colonel. "I will see M. de Léonelle and arrange the matter. As for the price, it will be nineteen hundred francs. You can very well comprehend that M. de Léonelle did not wish to make a speculation. He saw that I knew you; he was glad to manifest his respect; he eagerly seized an opportunity to be agreeable to his colonel. Now you can very

well show him a politeness in the course of a fortnight and ask him to dinner. He will probably refuse; he is a savage, a wolf. He shuts himself up every evening to work, outside of his duty, for his own account, from pleasure."

"'Matters were arranged in this way. Will he refuse? I do not think so. And was it only to be agreeable to his colonel? I do not think this either.'"

"'Saturday, June 7th. We were dismounting at half-past eight o'clock in the courtyard of the quarters. The colonel came to me and thanked me for obliging him; he thinks that it was for his sake that I consented to—The question of price was settled in two sentences, and the colonel added: "I think that they will probably invite you to dinner in the course of a fortnight, but do not be afraid; you can refuse. I said that you were a wolf, a savage."—"But, colonel——" "Is it not true? You refuse all invitations."—"Perhaps I shall not refuse this one, colonel."—"Hillo! did I not understand? You give at cost price a horse which is worth at least three thousand francs and which you at first declared that you did not wish to sell. Ho! ho! the little blonde has pretty eyes."—

"Well, yes, colonel; I confess that I think her charming!"

"'It escaped from me! The pleasure of speaking of her—and it was a little hard to have no confidant but Picot.

"'They came to call the colonel for the Saturday report. While the chef d'escadrons for the week was recounting the great events of the day before: Such a mare was kicked, such a man missed evening roll-call, such a horse was bitten, etc., etc., during this time the colonel looked at me with an amused expression as he twisted his heavy gray mustache. After the report he went off, and as he passed near me, he said: "Just see this young savage who is becoming civilized, and who sells his horses for love!"

"'The colonel is an excellent man, but horribly gossiping. My secret will soon be mine no longer!'"

"'Saturday, June 7th. It is frightful! Last night I saw him in a dream. Yes, that is the point to which I have come. If M. Gambetta is mixed up with this dream, it is because they talked about him all through dinner the evening before. Well, he was general-in-chief. Not M. Gambetta; no, M. de Léonelle. He commanded the whole French army; he won a great victory.

M. Gambetta came to him and said: "You have been Bonaparte—be Napoleon."

"'M. Gambetta wished to place a crown upon his head; but he replied with admirable modesty: "No, no, Bonaparte is enough for me; I do not care to be Napoleon."

"'And M. Gambetta replied: "That suits me quite as well; I shall remain in power."

"'How silly dreams are, and how silly it is to write such things!

"'During the day I rode Jupiter. He is still the same marvel. He did not appear, out of consideration for me, I am sure. In the evening, after dinner, reappearance of the colonel. Mamma, when she heard him announced, made a little face which meant to say: "What! this soldier again!"

"'The colonel told us that the matter of Jupiter was arranged at nineteen hundred francs. And then I saw that he turned about and manœuvred so as to carry off papa to smoke a cigar in the garden. A quarter of an hour passed. Mamma became impatient.—"What in the world can your father be doing with this colonel? He will catch cold; he is bare-headed. Take him his hat and try to make him come in."—"Yes, mamma."

"'I went into the garden. I heard this phrase pronounced by the colonel: "A pearl, I tell you, a pearl." And then: "Hush, take care." They changed the conversation. Ah! this is too much. Can he already have had my hand asked hierarchically by his colonel? Is this how matters are managed in the cavalry? It would be going somewhat fast, after a single interview in which we spoke of nothing but hay, straw, and oats!

"'The colonel and papa returned to the drawing-room. The colonel left. Papa appeared thoughtful. At eleven o'clock, when I kissed him before going up to my room, he took both my hands and said: "Are you pleased with this gentleman's horse?" I replied: "Oh! yes, papa. If you only knew how I adore my dear Jupiter! I adore him!!" I think that I said this with too much fire, too much enthusiasm, too much passion. I am afraid of betraying myself at every moment. When I speak of his horse it seems to me that I am speaking of him! And the pearl, who is the pearl? He or I?'"

"'Sunday, June 8th. This morning I received this letter from my sister: "I am completely exhausted. I have spent these two days in making forty calls. I managed to slip into

the conversation this little phrase: 'Do you happen to know a Lablinière family?' I obtained five or six replies, all admirable. They are people of irreproachable breeding. Plenty of money, which never does any harm, and money quite properly gained. About the young girl there was but a single cry: 'She is an angel!' So forward, captain, if your heart prompts you."

"'I remained stupefied. So every one can see that I am in love! My sister perceived it. At six o'clock came a little note from the father inviting me to dinner for next Wednesday, the 11th. The colonel had said to me: "In the course of a fortnight." Must I reply at once? No, only to-morrow.'"

"'Sunday, June 8th. This morning I came down early. The postman had just come. There was a bundle of letters on the salver in the antechamber. Is there one for me? No, but here is one for grandmamma, an official letter with a large red seal, and on the seal I read: "French Republic. War Office." To think that my fate is there, in that letter! For I am very sure that grandmamma asked for information. A servant came by and I fled like a thief. Ten o'clock. Grandmamma must be awake. She must have

read her letter. I went up to her room.—"Ah! there you are, little one!"

"'Grandmamma appeared quite gay; she kissed me very tenderly, more tenderly than usual. Oh! how pleased grandmamma was! One could see that merely by the way in which she kissed me this morning. This general's letter has given her pleasure.

"'To-day is Sunday. Papa did not go to Paris. After breakfast grandmamma said to him: "I wish to speak to you."—"Ah, and I to you."

"'They went together into the smoking-room. Why did grandmamma go there? To have papa read this letter? Grandmamma is patriotic. I have often heard her say that there was no nobler profession than that of arms, and that those mothers are to blame who from selfishness prevent their daughters from marrying soldiers. Grandmamma despises those young men whose only merit consists in killing a great many pigeons in the spring and pheasants in the autumn: whereas mamma has a secret weakness for the youths who do nothing with their ten fingers beyond the aforesaid slaughter of pigeons and pheasants. Grandmamma and mamma constantly dispute upon this point.

"'At last the day was over. In the middle of dinner papa said with a sort of indifference, "That young officer was really very civil; I have asked him to dinner for next Wednesday." — "For Wednesday!" cried mamma. "What is the need for so much haste? If you begin to have all these officers here! This one is charming, I admit, but he will bring others. Our house will become a barracks, a camp."'"

"'Monday, June 9th. I am becoming stupid. I took an hour this morning to write the eight little lines of my letter to accept this invitation. I began it over again ten times, twenty times, and hardly had it gone when I recollected that I had put the word pleasure twice in these unlucky eight lines.'"

"'Monday, June 9th. He has accepted! We were at breakfast this morning. All the windows of the dining-room open upon the courtyard. Suddenly mamma exclaimed: "Come: There is another soldier in the court!"

"'I looked, and this phrase escaped from me: "It is Picot."

"'Then you should have seen mamma and heard her—"That caps the climax! Here is Jeanne, who now knows the names of all these

soldiers!"—"Of only one, mamma. It is the one who brought Jupiter the other day."

"'Grandmamma burst into a hearty laugh. How gay grandmamma is! She was singing on the stairs this morning. Certainly the information given by this general must be good.

"'After breakfast I got possession of his letter. How elegant it is in its simplicity! Here it is: "Sir, I have received the invitation which you have done me the honour to send me for Wednesday, June 11th. I accept it with the greatest pleasure and the utmost gratitude. I have learned with a great deal of pleasure that mademoiselle your daughter was satisfied with the horse. Accept, sir, the assurance of my respectful sentiments."

"'It was purposely, I am sure, that he repeated the word pleasure twice. He knew that I would see his letter, and he wished to emphasize that idea.'"

"'Tuesday, June 10th. I dine at her house to-morrow.'"

"'Tuesday, June 10th. He dines here to-morrow.' And we come to the great day of the dinner. Do you read the account of the dinner."

"Will you take my advice, my Jeanette? Let

us stop where we are for to-day. And besides, just see what time it is."

"Oh! two o'clock in the morning."

"Yes, two o'clock in the morning. That is one good reason for stopping. It is not the only one. I think that from now on our entries will become terribly monotonous. It will be love, and still love, and always love! There will be nothing but that in our little notes—in mine at least."

"In mine, too."

"And love like everybody's, with liberty to see one another, to talk to one another. As soon as I could look at you closely, much merit I found in having seen you as you were, as you are; that is, the prettiest and best of women! Much merit in having loved you! No, don't you know, what was rare and delicious in our romance was its beginning. We loved each other in some sort instinctively, at a distance, at first sight, without needing to speak or to know one another. As for me, I instantly read your soul through your eyes. From the 11th of June, the day of the dinner, to the 17th of August, the day of the wedding, we exchanged a great many words; we said many sweet and charming things to one another; but never, my Jeanette, did we

have a more tender, passionate conversation than that absurd dialogue in the courtyard by the stable, in the presence of Jupiter and Picot. I was seized then with such an emotion that I felt that my fate was settled forever. I went out of that little courtyard in the Rue des Arcades with the certainty that you would be mine, and that my whole life would be spent in trying to make you happy. That was nearly two years ago. Have I succeeded so far, my love?"

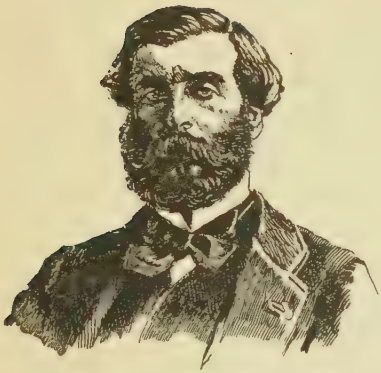
"Oh! yes, my darling. Oh! yes!"

She was no longer upon the little stool; she was on his knees. And laying aside the little books, they read no further that evening.

THE END OF A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE

THE PORTRAITS OF LUDOVIC HALÉVY

THE PORTRAITS OF LUDOVIC HALÉVY



LUDOVIC HALÉVY.
After a drawing by Liphart, about 1866.

Among those who in the year 1860 visited at the house of the Duc de Morny in Paris, and frequented the political world of the Parliament, there could be seen a young secretary belonging to the legislative body whose thoughtful air and serious face, with its grave and regular features, could not fail to make a vivid impression on all those who saw it. This newcomer, upon whom Fortune seemed already to have bestowed her favours, was no other than Ludovic Halévy, the future author of *Frou-frou* and *Abbé Constantin.* We do not give a portrait taken in his early youth, as we have done with other authors; but we are inclined to think that

LUDOVIC HALÉVY.
After an engraving dated 1870.

no other writer was surrounded in his young days by so much prestige and happiness. His was a bright childhood. His uncle, Fromental Halévy, was director of singing at the Opera, and there the whole family lived with him. He who was to give to the world that refined satire *Madame Cardinal* and *Les Petites Cardinales* was often as a child of five or six taken to one of the boxes to hear a first act at the Opera, after which he was hastily put to bed. No wonder, then, that this young child brought up, so to speak, on the stage of one of the greatest theatres of the world, should aspire one day to equal renown with his uncle, the celebrated composer, Jaçques François Fromental Élie Halévy, who died at Nice when his nephew had just attained his twenty-eighth year.

The oldest portrait that is here given of Ludovic Halévy is of the year 1865, a felicitous year full of triumph for the young author, wherein he obtained in collaboration with Meilhac and

Offenbach the great success of *La Belle Hélène.* He is then thirty-two years old. The *Tout Paris* and the *Tout Compiegne* imperialists are repeating each to the other the name of this new Beaumarchais. The frivolous, pleasure-loving society of the court of Napoleon III joyfully greet this quiet and discreet young man, who understands so well how to amuse them. His face, gentle and refined in expression, is framed round with a beard *à la Musset*; his head is of the type that one finds among the last drawings of Deveria, or in the first portraits of Winterhalter. He has something of the notary about him, something also of the barrister in a small country town. It is thus that one pictures to oneself one of those young provincials landing in Paris, with the last book of M. de Balzac. This young man, however, has the protection of the Duc de Morny; he has the prettiest women of his time, the Pourtales or the Castiglione, among his admirers; and he comes armed with that badge of folly which since all time has cheered mankind. His great friendship with Meilhac, so prolific in their joint work, is illustrated in a group of about the year 1869. That year they jointly produced *Frou-frou* at the Gymnase. It is the period of their greatest literary capabilities. Big and burly, recalling Balzac

to us in his physique, Henri Meilhac stands there beside Halévy, who is seated cross-legged in an arm-chair. In contrast to the good-natured, laughing face of the former, the master writer of *Kara-Kiri* is always himself, tranquil, impassive, and collected. Thus the duality of their complex

LUDOVIC HALÉVY.
After a photograph taken at the château of A. Rothschild in 1890.

talent explains itself, that union wherein Meilhac did all the laughing and Ludovic Halévy personated the smiles, the delicate reserve, sometimes also the tears. But time flies. The brilliant society of the second empire, whose leisure they so often beguiled by their talents, disappears

with the defeat. These young men, who have so well described the splendour and careless laughter of that Parisian world, will soon be (Halévy at least) but her saddened sons and historians.

We give here a portrait of Halévy of the year 1870. It represents the sorrowful writer of *The Invasion* and *Abbé Constantin*, who, aged, a gentle philosopher, comes before us under a more austere aspect; with features fuller of individual character, more distinctly marked. He has a frank, straightforward look, and the scarcely discernible smile has altogether disappeared. Ludovic Halévy, now more serious, has turned his back upon the droll and laughable silhouettes of the frivolous *Demoiselles Cardinal*; he has become the historian of battles, the sensational narrator of *L'Insurge*, the moralist who expounds his theories in his novels. It is these novels, so full of light and shade, so subtle, so beautifully exact, which won for him as a writer of peculiarly personal talent (apart from any collaboration) a place in the Academy. This great event happened on December 4, 1884. "It is that good and delightful *Abbé Constantin*," M. Jules Claretie wrote to him, "who has taken you by the hand and led you straight among us."

The sketch of M. Ludovic Halévy in his

study, which we give here, is the most recent one of all. The great writer sits at his table with his

LUDOVIC HALÉVY AND HENRY MEILHAC.
After a photograph of the two collaborators taken in 1869.

head slightly inclined to the left. His hair and beard are gray, even white, his expression patriarchal. Behind him the walls are lined with books. In reading the slight sketch of the clever academician written by a spirited chronicler in 1892, we seem to understand him exactly. "M. Ludovic Halévy's appearance," wrote the lady

who signed herself *Etincelle*, "is not typical of his brilliant gaiety. He is very dark, very sombre, and his hair and beard have been, so to speak, in half-mourning for many years. I like him better thus; he looks less sad. His conversation reveals the author of *Frou-frou*. It is ingenuous with many original views."

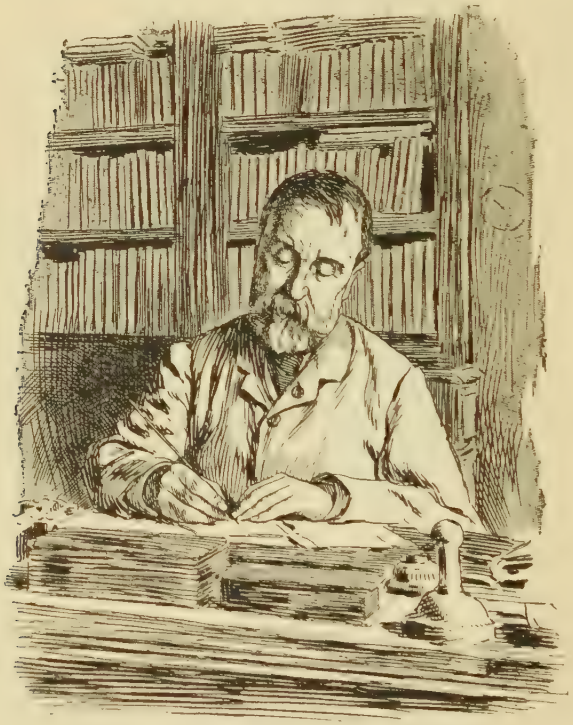
Like the lives of some happy people, M. Ludovic Halévy's life has no characteristic history. No drama, no great adventures have left their mark upon his placid regular features, dedicated to persistent success. His days passed away, cradled in an easy glory whose attainment seemed without effort, without struggle.

That calm face, amiable, rather commonplace in its gentleness, and without much spirit in its expression, offered but a mediocre attraction to the painters and sculptors; even the photographers seemed not to have sought to reproduce his features, as those of a celebrity with which to tempt the public. We know of no painting and no bust of any value representing the author of *Abbé Constantin*. Even lithographs fail us, and thus the task of collecting the iconography of this refined writer is a comparatively short and easy one.

We are indebted to the information of the

author himself, and the portraits which we offer are all that exist of him since the year 1865—nothing more, nothing less!

Man of the world, and constantly far removed from studios and artist life, Ludovic Halévy had



LUDOVIC HALÉVY AT HIS WRITING-TABLE.
The last photograph of the writer, taken in 1902.

not the opportunity of collecting the sketches and studies and statuettes which are gathered by

those who, voluntary exiles from the fashionable *salons*, become frequenters of the studios of the masters of the brush, and of their artistic and professional gatherings.

They are to be pitied who leave nothing but photographs of themselves behind them, since photographs are so wanting in eloquence, so unexpressive. Art alone can make features survive, and give some charm of expression to the portrait that it ennobles. It is to be much regretted that Ludovic Halévy left nothing but photographs of himself.

OCTAVE UZANNE.

THE END

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